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# Top Ten Things When You Begin Remodeling

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Whether you are remodeling to sell the home or just to make it more comfortable for the coming years, remodeling is a smart decision. But it is a decision that requires planning and patience.

## Top Ten Things When You Begin Remodeling

The National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) suggests following this ten step program when considering any remodeling project.

**Step 1: Assess your current situation.** Do you have the funds, time and patience to remodel your home? Does it make sense to remodel or simply move into a larger home? According to the American Homeowner Foundation, moving can be extremely expensive, typically involving a 6 percent commission on the sale of the current home, plus another 2-4 percent for closing, moving and other costs. They suggest that if you like your present neighborhood, you should look into what improvements you could make for 8-10 percent of your current home's value before you seriously consider moving as an alternative to remodeling.

**Step 2: Decide how long you intend to stay in your present home.** Are you remodeling so you can sell faster or get a higher sale price? Or are you remodeling to create a more comfortable environment for a long-term situation? The answers to those questions will determine how much money you should spend and the scope of the remodeling project you should realistically undertake.

**Step 3: Start defining the areas of the home that you want to change.** You should have some idea of what the remodeling project will entail before you call a contractor. Cut pictures out of magazines. Make a list of rooms that need to be altered and the reasons for those changes. This information will help speed the design phase of your remodel.

**Step 4: Clear plenty of time on your calendar for the project.** Do not attempt to remodel your entire kitchen the month before Thanksgiving-it's unrealistic. You should establish a realistic timetable with your contractor that allows for delays due to weather, supply shortages, or other glitches that may occur.

**Step 5: Find a reputable contractor.** The only way to protect yourself during a remodeling project is to hire a professional contractor. Make sure that you choose a contractor who is insured, licensed (if required in your state) and a member of a professional trade association, such as NARI.

**Step 6: Create a budget.** Decide how much you can realistically afford for the project before you start. If you are remodeling to sell, your budget should not exceed the increase in sales price of the home that is the result of remodeling. If you plan on staying in the home for a lengthy amount of time, you should spend a little more to get what you want.

**Step 7: Request a comprehensive proposal from your contractor.** The proposal should tell you how much the project is going to cost and what types of products will be used. If the proposal comes in above your budget limit, talk to your contractor about other options. Sometimes you can accomplish the same look with other products or design techniques.

**Step 8: Get a complete, written contract before the work begins.** The contract should cover the description of the project, timetable, payment schedule, types of products, etc., with provisions for the responsibilities of the contractor, subcontractors, change order procedures, warranties, and alternative dispute settlement clauses.

**Step 9: Tie payments to work stages.** Be wary of any contractor who wants a large amount of money up front. Normal contracts split payments by decreasing percentages of total cost and are tied to significant work stages in the project. Please note, however, that a large amount of money is usually required at the start of kitchen remodels to cover the costs of ordering appliances.

**Step 10: Take a deep breath and keep your perspective.** Remodeling can be noisy, time-consuming and disruptive to the normal home environment. It's important to keep your sense of humor and stay focused on the end result, not the process that takes you there.