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12 Tips to Nail Your DIY Remodel

You're super optimistic as you embark on your DIY remodel. You have visions of kicking back and sharing your renovated space with family and friends.

Before you strap on the toolbelt... do your homework and
PREPARE!



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1 Craft a Master Plan

Your master plan will become your renovation roadmap. Organize it by room, task type, or whatever makes sense to you. For each major task, document who will perform the work (you or a hired professional), permits required, materials, and tools needed.

By now you've thought through your priorities and solutions that complement your needs and lifestyle. While drafting your master plan, continue collecting and documenting your remodel ideas. Go to remodel stores and sites to look at materials, flooring, cabinets, counters, finishes, and fixtures. Use sites like Pinterest for inspiration and as a platform to tag and organize design ideas.

2 Set Your Budget

Your renovation budget should include costs for materials, tools, site protection, hired professionals (if needed), consultants, permits, and decorative finishes. Take time to research actual costs to help ensure you populate your budget with realistic numbers. Be sure to include an extra buffer for unplanned expenses (10-20%). It's common to encounter unforeseen issues once you get into a home project. Be prepared for surprises!

3 Build a Schedule

You may not need fancy scheduling software to prepare your timeline, but you do need to draft your high-level dates and milestones, then add detailed tasks to support your key dates. Think about steps that need to occur early on to support the schedule, so you don't fall behind waiting on something you hadn't originally planned for. For example, some materials may need to be ordered and require lead time (could be weeks or months) before delivery. Schedule time to take measurements, plan your materials requirements, and order your materials well in advance of when you need them.

Before we move on to #4, really think through the above steps. A plan, a schedule, and a budget can save you headaches... big ones.



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4 Create Drawings and Designs

Check with your local planning or building department to see what drawings and/or designs you need for permitting. Even if permits are not required, you'll need drawings for your planning and reference. Include measurements and current locations for electrical, gas, windows, etc. Include drawings of your existing space and drawings for your new design. Make sure your new drawings accurately depict space needed for new cabinets, appliances, counters, plumbing fixtures, etc. Also use your drawings to help confirm that the flow of the proposed space meets your needs and lifestyle.

5 Recognize Your Limits

DIY projects are a great way to stretch your brain & muscles and explore new frontiers... but know when you need help. Some tasks (electrical, gas lines, etc.) require expertise (and permitting) and carry safety risks to your family and property. There will be plenty of tasks for you to embrace and sharpen your skills with. Let the experts do their magic. (Be sure to verify that any hired professional is licensed to perform the work and provides their proof of liability insurance.)

6 Protect Your Site

Whether you're leaving furniture and belongings in the renovation area or removing all items, you'll need materials for site protection. Include in your budget materials to cover furniture and all belongings, flooring, and surfaces. This will help avoid paint splatter on counters, dings on hardwood floors, drywall dust on a couch, etc.

7 Obtain Permits

Permits and regulations vary by location, so be sure to visit your local planning or building department to check if your project requires permitting. This information may be available online. You might be surprised by what tasks require permits. Again, if you're hiring help for more complex tasks, make sure they pull the correct permits on your behalf—at the end of the task, a city, county, or state inspection may be required to approve the work and close out the permit.



8 Removing a wall?

Before you consider sending a sledgehammer through the wall, hire a structural engineer. They'll exam the area and determine if the wall is load bearing. They'll advise you on requirements for permitting and expertise needed to conduct the work. Depending on the complexity and permit requirements, this may be a task for which you hire a licensed and insured professional.

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9 Check Your Toolbox

As part of your planning (see #1), verify the tools you need for each phase of your renovation. If you're missing tools, this will allow you time to procure the tool and avoid having to track it down at an inopportune moment during your project. (It might be more cost effective to rent a certain tool rather than purchasing it new.) Be clear on proper use of all tools. This will ensure you use each tool safely and most efficiently and are prepared with proper safety gear (ear, eye, head protection).

10 Move Out

Depending on the scope and complexity of your DIY remodel, you might consider vacating. If you're renovating an isolated space, like an office, you may be able to section that area off with minimal disruption to the rest of your household; however, if you're performing a large-scale remodel, it may be extremely challenging to maintain the safety of family & pets. You may improve efficiency, focus, and timelines with the space cleared.

11 Sweat the Small Stuff

Fixtures and hardware, although small, can have a big impact. New knobs and handles on freshly painted cabinets can add a pop to your kitchen and a nod to your style. Updated sink faucets and shower fixtures can have a major impact in your bathroom, usually without great cost.

12 Friday Tidy

After a long day, it might be tempting to quickly pack it in and shut the door. Carve out time at the end of each day to tidy up. Put tools in their place, take inventory of materials, perform a light cleaning, and remove debris. You'll appreciate starting the next day in a clean space knowing where everything is. Also plan for a deep clean at the end of your project, then enjoy your new space!

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to maximize your next DIY project!



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