

Five Tips for a Successful Home Remodel

As spring approaches, many homeowners grow eager to start remodeling projects to update and refresh their surroundings. Before getting started, it's a good idea to hire a professional remodeler for a workable plan and better results, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

Here are five tips for planning a successful home remodel that you can enjoy for many years to come.

Compile a list of home remodeling ideas and draft a budget for the work.

You likely have some projects in mind, such as modernizing the bathroom, renovating the kitchen, replacing windows or repairing the roof. Prioritize your wish list: Maybe you don't have the budget for your dream remodel, but professional remodelers can maximize your dollars by doing the work in phases, suggesting budget-friendly products and materials, and implementing creative design solutions.

Look for a professional remodeler to help plan the project.

Start by searching NAHB's Directory of Professional Remodelers at www.nahb.org/remodel. You'll get a list of nearby remodelers to contact. Asking friends and neighbors for names of qualified remodelers will also help you find a match for your project.

Check the references and background of the remodeler.

After you start speaking with remodelers and find one or two who match your project's needs, be sure to conduct some background research by checking with the Better Business Bureau, talking to their references, and asking if they are a trade association member (such as NAHB Remodelers). Remodelers with these qualities tend to be more reliable, better educated, and more likely to stay on top of construction and design trends.

Agree on a contract.

Talk over the details of the home remodeling project and begin reviewing the contract. You'll want to check the remodelers' insurance coverage, ask about any warranties on their work, know who is responsible for obtaining any building permits, and understand the process for making any change orders after the contract is signed. Make sure that you and your remodeler see eye to eye before you sign on the dotted line.

Take advantage of the energy efficiency tax credits.

If your remodel includes replacing windows or doors, adding insulation, installing new roofing, upgrading heating or air-conditioning units, updating the water heater, or installing energy generating products (such as solar panels, heat pumps, or wind turbines) then you can take advantage of federal energy efficiency tax credits through 2010 that will help defray costs and maximize your remodeling budget while reducing home energy bills. (Learn more at www.nahb.org/efficiencytaxcredit.)