

10 Tips for a Smooth Home Remodel

Follow these 10 tips when you embark on an exciting home remodeling project.

1. Establish effective two-way communication with the home remodeler. It's essential to have good communication for a smooth home remodeling project. Does the remodeler listen? Does he or she answer questions clearly and candidly? Can you reach him when you need to? Does he return phone calls promptly? Does he let you know when problems arise and work with you on solving them?
2. Make sure you are compatible with the contractor. You'll spend a lot of time with your remodeler so it's important to have a good rapport and trust in him or her.
3. Set a clear and mutual understanding about the schedule. You and your home remodeler should agree on the schedule up front to avoid conflict and problems later in the project.
4. Request a written proposal. Often, two people remember the same conversation differently. Get the proposal in writing and work with the remodeler to ensure it reflects your wishes.
5. Get a clear and mutual understanding on miscellaneous details up front. There are a lot of little details that need to be settled before work starts. What times of day will they be working? How will he or she access the property? How will cleanup be handled? How will they protect your property?
6. Remember to be flexible. Remodeling is an interruption of your normal life. Remember to be flexible during the project so that you can handle the unexpected and go with the flow.
7. Discuss and agree on how change orders will be handled. With home remodeling there is always the chance you may want to change materials or other project details during the job. Before work starts, make sure you agree with your remodeler about how these changes will be handled. Also understand that changes could affect the schedule and the budget, so it's important you have all changes in writing.
8. Agree on a well-written contract that covers all the bases. The contract should include these elements: a timetable for the project, price and payment schedule, detailed specifications for all products and materials, insurance information, permit information, procedures for handling change orders, lien releases, provisions for conflict resolution, notice of your right under the Federal Trade Commission's Cooling Off Rule (your right to cancel the contract within three days if it was signed someplace other than the remodeler's place of business), and details on the important issues (such as access to your home, care of the home, cleanup and trash removal).
9. Ask for a written lien waiver from the home remodeler upon completion of the work. If the remodeler hires subcontractors for portions of the work, then it is their responsibility to see the subcontractors compensated. In order to ensure this has been done and to protect yourself, ask for a written lien waiver when the work is finished. This document will verify everyone has been paid.
10. Establish a project plan, covering all phases and dependencies in the work. Plan your big picture goals with the remodeler and discuss your needs. Hire a remodeler who will plan with you, listen to concerns and answer questions.