HOW TO GET YOUR

Home Repair and Remodeling Projects

DONE RIGHT AT THE BEST PRICE

A Consumer Report

Handyman Hub™ Home Repairs and Remodeling

www.handymanhub.com

How To Get Your Home Repair And Remodeling Projects Done Right At The Best Price

A home remodeling or renovation project can be a daunting idea. It doesn't have to be, and we'll show you why.

Becoming an informed consumer is your best chance of getting your home repair and remodeling projects done correctly at the best price.

If you're considering any type of home improvement project, you may have some concerns. You're not alone. Most people considering these types of projects share your concerns. Here are some of the most common considerations people have:

- How do I find a dependable, honest company to do my project?
- How much will my project cost? Can I afford to do this project?
- How long will it take to complete the project?
- How many different workers will be in my home during the project?
- Do I have to be at home while workers are working?
- How big of a mess will this project make in my home?
- How do I select the materials I want to use?

This report discusses each of these points and gives you suggestions to follow so that your home repair or remodeling project is done correctly at the best price. You'll learn how to choose the best company for your remodel and be armed with enough information about the remodeling process to easily go forward with your project.

Does The Idea of Home Remodeling Concern You?

If you have the right information and know what to expect, the process can be a fun and enjoyable experience.

There are seven important questions to consider when beginning a home improvement project.

This report guides you through the maze of issues and gives you tools for being the best consumer possible.

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How Do I Find A Dependable, Honest Company To Do My Project?

This is the most important question to the overall success of your project. If you select the wrong person or company your project could be a long and painful process that may leave you with a poorly done job with no recourse.

You may notice that we use the term 'company' when we refer to the people you hire for your project. We believe it is a safer bet for the homeowner to use a 'company' as opposed to hiring an individual craftsman for your project.

There are several reasons for making this recommendation. Let's look at a real example that reinforces. The Taylors found someone to remodel their bathroom. The craftsman seemed like a nice person - well dressed, well spoken, and knowledgeable. Also, his bid was considerably less than the other two bids the Taylors had received. He wrote up an agreement that they all signed and the Taylors asked him to begin work the next day.

They agreed to pay the craftsman in stages of completion. The first payment was due after the tear-out was completed. At this time, the craftsman asked for the first progress payment of $750 plus $2500 for the materials needed to complete the job.

The Taylors gave the craftsman a check for $3250 and he left to pick up their materials. Two days passed and they had not heard back from him. Mrs. Taylor calls the craftsman's cell phone and leaves him a voice mail message. A week passed and they still had not heard back from him.

Three weeks passed with no response to any phone messages. The next attempt to contact the craftsman was met with a message that the phone was no longer in service. The Taylors had no recourse and to make matters worse, they had a torn apart bathroom.

If your only point of contact with your remodeler is a cell phone number, you may run into serious problems on the project

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Unfortunately, what happened to the Taylors is all too common. Shady craftsmen take advantage of unsuspecting consumers. They lose large sums of money, and end up with torn apart homes.

Imagine that the stranger you invite into your home could steal your valuables or hurt someone in your family. Yes, this is happening too often in this industry.

The point here is not to scare you but to underscore the importance of knowing who you are inviting into your home. You need to do your homework.

When looking for someone to repair or remodel your home, work with a real company. Here are some important considerations. Look for:

- A company that has roots in the community
- A company that carries insurance and guarantees their work
- A company that you can contact even if the remodeler himself is not available
- References – If a remodeler cannot give you 5 or 6 references don't consider working with him
- References that give positive reports
- Membership with the Better Business Bureau (BBB)
- A current insurance certificate -- If they do show you a certificate, feel free to call the company to be sure it's real
- A written, one year warranty of their work

Doing this background work is the most important step in getting your project done correctly. There are good independent craftsmen out there but if you are considering using one do your homework. Find out his address so if he looses his cell phone you can still contact him.

Price is an important consideration but it cannot be you only consideration. The Taylors thought they were getting a good deal.

At the end of this report you'll find a useful tool, the Contractor Interview Checklist – use this when you interview potential contractors for your project.

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How Much Will My Project Cost? Can I Afford To Do This Project?

This is another good question, but it really depends on how much you want to spend.

If price is your only concern and you just want your project done for the lowest possible price you can go to Craig's List and look for someone for $15 or $20 an hour to do your project. However, this goes back to the previous question - **do you want someone like that coming into your home?**

In the Denver metro area, if a **remodeler** is working for $15 or $20 an hour he is not a remodeler. Yes, you want to save money, but having the work done right, the first time, is the goal.

Let's look at some general examples. A good quality **bathroom remodel** for a standard size bathroom, 6 feet by 8 feet, could be done for $2000 or for $15,000. It depends on what you want your bathroom to be when it is finished.

For example, tile can cost anywhere from 80 cents a square foot to $30 or $40 a square foot, plus installation costs. Plumbing fixtures for this bathroom can run from $300 to $10,000 or more. A luxury air jetted soaker bathtub alone can run $3000-$4000.

You get the picture. You can spend a little or a lot, depending on what your budget is and what you want. It's important to have an idea of what you want to spend on your project first, and start designing the look and feel from there.

Professional remodelers will be happy to come to your home and give you an estimate on what you want to do. The big question will be "what finishes do you want?" That's where the costs begin to add up, and you need information about your options so that you can make decisions that work within your budget.

We recommend that you price your materials in a store, or on-line before the remodeler comes to give you an estimate. This way you can get to the project total much easier. It really does not cost much

Do you know what you want to spend?

Will the improvement add to the value of your house?

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more, in labor, to install a $100 toilet than it does to install a $1500 toilet.

Our recommendation is to have a solid idea about the "finishes" that you want before calling the remodeler for a price. His price will be much more accurate if he knows what materials he is going to be working with.

Another contractor bidding possibility for you to consider is called "Time and Materials" (T&M).

As the term implies, the **remodeler** charges by the hour for all the work on the project and then adds the cost of materials, plus mark up on the labor charges. Depending on the agreement an additional percentage of the project costs will be added on for profit and for overhead.

This is a very popular option for **home repair and remodeling** projects because remodelers like it. It virtually guarantees a good profit for the remodeling company.

One of the persuasive arguments contractors use when proposing this arrangement is that if they have to give you a firm bid, the bid will have to be high to cover any contingencies that may arise during the work.

This is a valid argument, to a point. No doubt things that could not be anticipated often come up during remodeling or home repair projects. But even in a straight bid project there will be a contingency in the agreement for work that could not be anticipated.

Some projects do not lend themselves to a firm bid and should be handled on an hourly basis, but most projects can be bid. An experienced remodeler should know how long it will take to do the work.

Is **Time and Materials** a good option for you? The biggest problem with hourly work, of course, is that there is no incentive for the contractor to work quickly or efficiently. After all he is getting paid for every hour he and his crew are there working.

There is less incentive for the Time & Materials contractor to understand exactly what you want. If something needs to be re-done the contractor gets paid more money

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However, if the contractor has given you a firm bid and will have to do any re-dos on his own time, he will want to be very sure of what you want before he begins work.

Even if you decide to use a contractor on a T&M basis you still need a written agreement spelling out:

- The hourly rate for each level of worker
- The amount of mark up on every aspect of the job
- A projection of hours to complete the job
- A specific description of the warranty – what it covers, and for how long

By the way, if a company wants to charge you a fee to come to your home for a remodeling estimate, call another company.

How Long Will It Take To Get My Project Done, Start To Finish?

This depends on whether the remodeler will be working on your project full time, or not. Often remodelers will have multiple projects going at the same time.

Your remodeler may already have two or three other projects going, so it's going to take him longer to complete the job than the remodeler who can work full time on it start to finish. This is something that must be agreed upon before you sign the contract.

Also, will the guy you are talking to actually be doing the work or will he be coordinating others doing the work? It may not matter to you but you should know if he is going to be on the job full time until it is done.

Another consideration is the materials. For example, with a **kitchen remodel** your new cabinets may take six weeks after ordering to arrive at the job site. Our recommendation is to not begin the demolition on the old kitchen until all the materials for the new kitchen are available.

Two Primary Considerations For How Long A Project Will Take:

How much time the contractor is going to devote to your project

How long it takes to order and receive the materials

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This will make the project go faster and smoother once it is started. Remember you will be without the use of much, if not all, of your kitchen during this process. Even though all possible materials are on hand, your new granite counter tops can't be ordered until the old cabinets have been removed and the new cabinets are installed.

At this point the granite fabricator will come to your home and make a template or pattern of your new counter tops and then fabricate the new countertops. That process usually takes about a week or so. Then, he comes back to install your new counters.

Once the countertops have been installed you can finish up the plumbing and electrical installation in your **new kitchen remodel**.

So the two primary considerations for how long the project will take are the availability of materials and whether or not your project will be a full time commitment for the remodeler or not.

Generally speaking you can figure a complete **bathroom remodel** with tile to take between 7 and 10 workdays. A bit longer for larger bathrooms.

Kitchens vary widely in size but a complete **kitchen remodel** is likely going to take 14-20 workdays once all the materials are on hand. If you are using in-stock cabinets and laminate countertops that time can be cut in half. This assumes you are replacing materials, in place, and not relocating fixtures or modifying layouts.

Another common **remodeling project** is a **basement finish**. Depending on the size of the project basement finishes can take a bit longer than other projects.

The process is a little different than a remodel project because you are not remodeling, you are building a new living space.

On the next page is a list of the actual work sequence with the number of days for construction of each phase that you might expect in your basement finish. These estimates are for an average size, 1000 square foot basement, after you have done all of the preliminary planning and design phases and the work is ready to begin.

Important Point:

Is your project going to be a full time commitment for your remodeler, or will he be working on a number of projects at the same time?

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1. Protection of surfaces that won't be disturbed
2. Installation of vapor barrier and insulation if necessary (3-5 days)
3. Frame new walls (4-6 days)
4. Plumbing rough-in work for bathroom (2-4 days)
5. Heating and/or air-conditioning rough-in work (2-4 days)
6. Electrical rough-in work (2-4 days)
7. Other rough-ins that must be installed before drywall, i.e. speaker, cable, computer, etc.
8. **Drywall installation** (6-9 days)
9. **Flooring Installation**
    - Carpet Installation (1-2 days)
    - **Tile Installation** (4-6 days)
    - **Laminate Installation** (3-5 days)
10. **Door & trim installation** (3-5 days)
11. **Interior Painting** (3-5 days)
12. Plumbing, Electrical heating/air-conditioning trim out (2-4 days)
13. Final trim out & clean (2-3 days)

Obviously these time frames are general and it would depend on how many people are working on the project and how well it is scheduled. In a larger spaced like a basement several craftsmen can be working at the same time.

Plan that your **basement finish** will most likely take 30 to 60 days to complete. The good news is you are not living in it as with a kitchen or **bathroom remodel**.

This average-sized bathroom remodel, using different tradesmen, can take four weeks or more

The same bathroom remodel, using one multi-skilled and qualified craftsman can be completed in less than two weeks

How Many Different Workers Will Be In My Home During The Project?

Another consideration for how long will the job take, is how many craftsmen will be working on the project? Some homeowners do not

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want a bunch of workers in and out of their homes every day during their **home improvement project**.

There is a misconception that the more people involved in a remodeling project the quicker it will be completed.

This is not necessarily the case. Generally, the process goes in stages as outlined above, depending on the scope of the project. This is the sequence of the typical **remodel** process:

1. Protect surfaces that won't be disturbed
2. De-construct the existing area
3. Clean up
4. New framing & insulation as required
5. Plumbing rough-in work
6. Heating and/or air-conditioning rough-in work
7. Electrical rough-in work
8. Drywall installation/finish
9. Tile installation
10. Doors & trim installation
11. Painting
12. Plumbing, Electrical heating/air-conditioning trim out
13. Final trim out & clean

If there are separate craftsmen for demo, plumbing, HVAC, electrical, **drywall installation**, **tile installation** and **interior painting** you will have seven or eight different craftsmen or crews coming into your home. This is the way many remodels are done, and this may be OK with you.

From a timing standpoint, how long does it take for each of these tradesmen to accomplish their work? In a **bathroom remodel**, for example, none of the "work" takes that long. But from a scheduling standpoint each of these tradesmen may be given two or three days to do their respective portions of the work. In most bathrooms, because of their size, only one person at a time can be working.

If you do not trust the person or company you are considering for your project to be in your home alone, do not hire them

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You cannot schedule up the plumber to work from 8:00 to 11:00 and then the HVAC person to work from 11:00 to 3:00 and the electrician to work from 3:00 to 5:00.

This industry does not operate on tight time frames. It's the nature of the work. If the HVAC person gets tied up on another job and cannot make the appointed time, the whole schedule will be off and the drywall people, for instance, may now be tied up for the next two weeks. The ripple effect continues -- the **tile installation** person cannot set tile on the walls until the **drywall** is done, and on and on. You get the idea.

So, as you can see, the question "how long will it take" is dependent on many factors. Review this during the bidding process so it's not left to chance. Get a firm commitment from your remodeler for a **start date** and a **completion date**. You do not want a three-week project turning into six or eight weeks because the remodeler had too may projects working at once.

Do I Have To Be At Home While Remodelers Are Working?

The short answer is no, you do not have to be at home during the project. But, let's discuss this so you can be more comfortable with your decision**.**

If you find a reputable company to begin with, and you have done the background and reference checks, you can feel comfortable being out of the house while work is done.

When you are interviewing remodelers or companies for your project decide if you will feel comfortable leaving the workmen in your home by themselves. If you would not be comfortable then you should probably not hire that remodeler or company.

Even if you plan to be at home during your project, there is a good chance that you'll have to leave the house at some point in the project, if it is one that will last for a week or more. You want to be OK with leaving a remodeler in your home alone.

Work with your contractor to plan out the stages of your project and include timeframes and costs for each

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You have a more complex decision if you are going to use the services of a company that will be employing numerous tradesmen throughout your project, as discussed earlier, because you will not have the opportunity to meet or interview each of the workmen in this scenario. You will have to place your trust in the person you contracted with that their people are trustworthy.

In this case, make sure during the bidding process that the person you contracted with, and hopefully trust, commits to being the one held responsible for the entire project.

Another important step is to keep valuables in locked and secure locations when you have people working in your home.

How Big Of A Mess Will This Project Make In My Home?

Remodeling is inherently messy. To begin a remodel you must first tear apart everything that will be replaced during the remodel.

There is dust, debris and noise during a remodel. The debris is often taken out through the house. In general, homeowners are surprised at how disruptive the remodeling process can be. However, it doesn't have to – that's where using a great company comes in.

He will explain how he is going to put down runners that span from the project area to the nearest exit point where demolition materials will be removed. He may also discuss installing plastic walls to mitigate dust from drifting into the rest of the home as well as any other measures he will be taking to make the experience as pleasant as possible for you and your family.

If the remodeler does not discuss these measures, that's a red flag. If the remodeler does not place a high value on keeping your home clean, it's not the right company for you.

Remodeling is messy. Professional remodelers will make dust and debris mitigation an integral part of their initial presentation.

A good remodeler will describe the specific steps he will take to ensure the least amount of impact on you and your home during the remodel process

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How Do I Select All The Materials I Want To Use?

This is the fun part. You get to be as creative as you'd like to pick out finishes that you'll live with for a long time.

Even in a small **bathroom remodel** there are a lot of finishes to decide on - the vanity, tub, faucet, sink, tile, accent tile, grout color, paint, towel bars, mirrors, hooks and toilet paper holder. You'll also decide about a new door and base and door trim.

You can find literally anything you are looking for on the Internet. For example, if you go to Houzz.com you can find thousands of pictures of every room in a house. Your new bathroom or kitchen does not have to be an original design. You may not be a designer but you probably know what you like when you see it.

Look through photos until you find one that "speaks to you". That just means find one you really like, and then duplicate it in your home. It's that easy. Then go to sites or stores that sell the look of the items you like and begin collecting your finishes. One site that has a lot of items to look at is signaturehardware.com.

You can order your finish materials or you can have your remodeler do it. If you order them and have them "on site" you will save a lot of money. Your remodeler will install anything you have purchased. If you are not sure about an item, ask your remodeler for input.

Remodelers like to supply all the materials because they often add their "contractors mark up" of 20-35%. You do not have to pay these fees. Save yourself money and order the finishing materials yourself. Your local hardware store may also have just what you are looking for.

Whether your tile costs one dollar a square foot or twenty dollars a square foot, if a professional installs your tile, it will look great when it's done. The same goes for most of the fixtures in your bathroom.

It can be very exciting to get just the right look and feel – but what if you are not very good at decorating- no problem – you can find just about any solution online

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We naturally gravitate toward the price range of materials that we are comfortable purchasing. Your new bathroom or kitchen will look great when it's done whether you purchase economy, mid range or high-end materials as long as it is "put together" with a nice look and is installed by a professional.

Do It For You And Your Family

Too many people make the decision to **remodel a bathroom or kitchen** or to get their **interior painting** done because they are going to put their home up for sale. They believe that updating will help fetch a better price for their home at sale.

While this may be true, why not remodel so that you can enjoy the results? Then when you decide to sell your home it already looks great. And the bonus is that you and your family got to enjoy your newly updated home.

We have had customers who do nice remodels because they were going to sell their homes but once the remodels were done they liked them so well they decided to stay put and enjoy their new kitchen or bath remodel. In other words, remodel for you not for the next owner of your home.

Now, you're ready to get your project started. Enjoy the process.

Please consider Handyman Hub, for your next home repair or remodel project.

We guarantee you peace of mind, high quality work, and great pricing and we never mark up materials. And, all of our work is insured and covered by a one-year written warranty.

We can be reached at 303-427-2955 or on-line at: handymanhub.com

Benjamin Franklin once said:

"The bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten."

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Contractor Interview Checklist

- ☐ Insurance Certificate
  - *If he does not have current insurance keep looking for a contractor who does*

- ☐ References (Get 5-6 references)
  - *Find out if the contractor's work was similar to yours and if they would use this remodeler again*

- ☐ Is he neat, clean and professional?
  - *His appearance is a reflection of the pride he will take in his work*

- ☐ Is he with a company or is he a sole proprietor?
  - *What if he gets sick? What if you can't get in touch with him?*

- ☐ Alternate means of contact other than cell phone?
  - *You should have his office number or his home number and a second means of contact*

- ☐ How many workers will be involved in the project?
  - *Make sure you are comfortable with the number of workers in your home*

- ☐ How long has he lived in the area?
  - *Is he a permanent resident or is he passing through?*

- ☐ How long has he been in this business?
  - *The more experience the better, he should have at least 6-8 years full time*
  - *15-20 years experience would be better*

- ☐ Is his business registered with the Colorado Secretary of State?
  - *This is basic and separates the pros from the hobbyist*

- ☐ Is he appropriately licensed for the work?
  - *Some home repair and remodeling projects do not require a license and some do*
  - *Different municipalities have different requirements*

- ☐ Is he a member of the local Better Business Bureau?
  - *Not all good companies are members but if they are that's that is a plus*

- ☐ What warranty does he offer?
  - *You must get a written guarantee for your project.*
  - *A warranty is no good if the contractor disappears*

- ☐ How will he expect to be paid?
  - *Will he require a deposit before work begins*
  - *Will there be progress payments*
  - *If so, how much and when*
  - *Hold at least 10% for a final payment*

- ☐ How will materials & debris be handled for this project?
  - *Who is responsible for picking up materials and disposing of the trash*

- ☐ When can he start - when will he finish?

This is not an exhaustive list but by the time you get these questions answered you should have a very good idea if this is the contractor you want to work with.