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## **Steps for Planning a Kitchen Remodel**

Remodeling a kitchen can seem like a Herculean task. In many homes this is the hub of family life and the most important room the house for gathering. The thought of having this room in a state of upheaval for two to three months is unsettling, to say the least. The components of this space: appliances, cabinetry, plumbing and lighting make this the most labor intensive and most expensive room in the house to remodel.

The most successful remodels are those where the homeowners have done detailed planning prior to hiring a contractor. Then they can work in concert, rather than at odds, to achieve their mutual goal with a minimum of frustration and delay. Many homeowners make the mistake of shopping before they have planned the kitchen, and then they are frustrated and confused by all of the options.

As you begin planning, list the pros and cons of your current kitchen. What is it that you want to keep? What do you want to eliminate? Manufacturers change the outside dimensions of wall ovens and microwaves about every five years. Buying new appliances when you replace cabinets will prevent expensive cabinet renovations later. Do you want to replace an electric stove with a gas cook top or radiant heat range? If so, a gas line may have to be moved or added if your appliance configuration is altered. Would a wine cooler or a trash compactor be more practical in your household? Do you need more pantry space, or would you rather have two ovens that you will only use six times a year? How much time and money are you willing to spend on everyday maintenance? Matte surfaces hide spots and mineral deposits, unlike polished stone or tile. Granite and marble counters are porous and will have to be expensively resealed every two to three years or stains become permanent. Are there any specialty appliances such as a built-in espresso maker or a dishwasher in a drawer that would affect the layout of the cabinets? Refinishing your current cabinets and adding new doors will save about 30% of the cost of total cabinet replacement. However, unless the cabinets are solid wood this is probably not a wise decision. Do you want computer/internet access in this area?

Plan your kitchen with your comfort level as first priority. Choose the flooring first because it will significantly impact the colors of the counters and the cabinet finishes. If you spend a lot of time in the kitchen you should select durable



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resilient flooring such as solid vinyl or laminate. If you order take out food more than you cook, a tile or stone floor is fine. Hardwood flooring is not a practical choice for the kitchen because an overflowing dishwasher will ruin the floor. If the kitchen is open to the family room, the kitchen lighting needs dimmers and under-the-cabinet task lighting on separate switches.

Raising the countertops to a 36-inch height is wonderful for people 5'6" or taller because it lessens back strain. Whirlpool makes a standard dishwasher elevated on a 6-inch pedestal for ease of loading.

When you choose appliances, keep your cooking style in mind. Would you be more likely to use four burners and a grill insert or six burners? Side by side refrigerators have narrow shelves which preclude chilling large items such as turkeys.

All the decorating magazines are showing kitchen islands and peninsulas. Nonetheless, these are not practical if the kitchen is narrow or if the open doors of appliances block the traffic flow between the island and the countertops.

Now you are ready to select the products for this important room. Shop in this order, and you won't have to make second choices:

1. Flooring
2. Cabinet finish and style
3. Countertop surfaces and edging
4. Appliances and finishes
5. Backsplash, tile, and wall colors
6. Lighting fixtures—both ambient and task

At this point you are ready to discuss your plans with a contractor to obtain accurate bids and a timeline for the completion of the work. The more time you put into planning the details of this space before you call the contractor, the greater the opportunity you have for the kitchen remodel to live up to your dreams.

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