

The Complete Guide to Planning the Perfect Remodel

An Insider's Guide to Planning, Budgeting, and Preparing for Your Remodel Before the Sales Pitch. Includes: Worksheets, Sample Budgets, Money-Saving Ideas, and More.



Master Build Advisor - MBA



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Find your additional resources here:

www.MasterBuildAdvisor.com

How to Use This Guide

This guide walks through the four cornerstones of a well-run remodel – vision, budget, timeline, and scope – and gives you the worksheets to work through each one. Read it straight through, or use the contents page to jump to what you need right now.

Start With a Free 20-Minute Call

No charge, no obligation, and open to anyone – whether you hire us, hire someone else, or run the project yourself. Bring your worksheets, a set of plans, a contractor’s proposal, or nothing but questions. Schedule at calendly.com/masterbuildadvisor/letstalk.

Two Ways to Use This Guide

1. Plan it yourself. Work through the worksheets on pages 8 through 24. Define your vision, build a realistic budget, write a room-by-room scope, and take that to your contractors. Everything you need to build a solid first-pass plan is here.

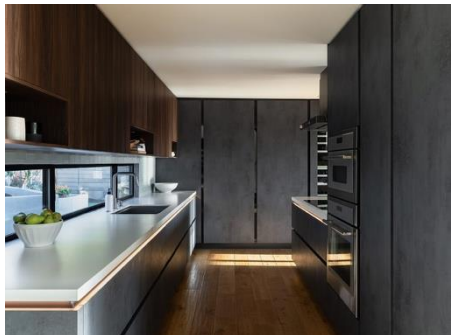
2. Plan it with us. Most homeowners can describe what they want but cannot price it, and that is the gap where budgets fail. Our team builds Low/High budgets, material takeoffs, and written scopes, then, if you like, reviews the bids you receive against them. This is the invisible work that keeps a project from unraveling. Engagement levels and pricing are on page 38.

Construction comes later: once a plan is in place and you love it, building it may be available through BristolCo or one of our transparent, open-book partners, separately, and never a condition of planning.

BEFORE



AFTER



Kitchen remodel, Orange County – planned and built with this process.

Begin With the End in Mind

We've all heard this before, thanks to Stephen Covey, and it stands here as well. In order to understand how to get what we need out of any remodeling project, we need to be clear about our objectives.



VISION 01

Begin by defining the purpose of your remodel. Are you updating your space for modern living, improving functionality, solving a problem, or adding value for resale? Understanding your "why" will guide your decision-making process.

BUDGET 02

Knowing how much you want to spend is critical whether you have unlimited funds or are working on a tight budget. Even if you dream of a new kitchen but have financial constraints, focusing on lower-cost, high-impact changes like paint and doing projects yourself can transform your space without breaking the bank.



TIMELINE 03

Be realistic about how long your project will take. Not sure? We're here to help. This guide will help you plan ahead to minimize disruption and expect the unexpected. A well-thought-out schedule can help keep the project on track with the critical buy-in from your subcontractor.



04 SCOPE

Define the scale of your project from the beginning. Are you tackling a single room or remodeling multiple spaces? Can you minimize disruption by focusing on one space at a time, or will it be best for you to work on a total transformation or multiple spaces?



The Importance of Planning

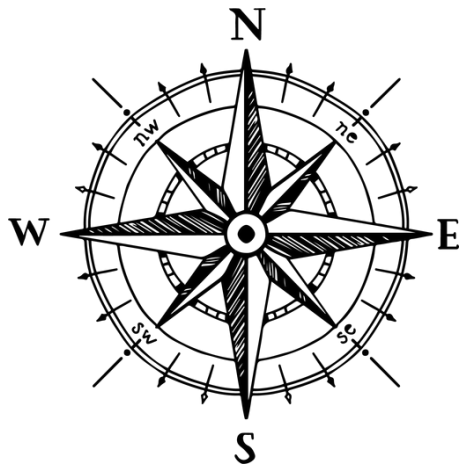
Welcome

Congratulations on your decision to embark on a remodel of your home. Remodeling can be an exciting and rewarding experience, but it also comes with challenges. This guide is designed to help you approach your remodel with a clear vision, realistic budget, and achievable timeline to set your project up for success. We will turn your clear vision into your guide to navigate you through the process. Master Build Advisor is also available to help you further, whether it's free information from our constantly improving website, planning documents from our qualified consultants, or partnering with one of our talented and transparent General Contractors to execute your plans.



The Process

Remodeling is typically done to solve a problem, improve functionality, or enhance aesthetics, often a combination of these. Sometimes your space is functional and you just want to update the look; other times there is a functional problem you would like to solve. Most renovations address multiple items. It's important to be clear about what your goals are and realize that the goal of staying on budget will sometimes require other options to solve a problem. It's all about balancing the 4 critical pieces: your Vision, Budget, Timeline, and Scope.



Cornerstones in Detail

Vision

Your vision defines what the remodel is meant to accomplish. Begin with the problems you want to solve and the way you want the finished space to function, feel, and support daily life. Appearance matters, but finishes should serve a larger purpose. Consider what is not working now, what must improve, and what a successful result would look like for your household. A clear vision helps you distinguish essential improvements from attractive extras and gives you a reliable standard for evaluating later decisions.

Sometimes you have a functional space that works well, and you just want to update the look; that's good news. Updating finishes can be the most budget-friendly approach to a remodel.

Budget

Your budget should reflect both what you can comfortably spend and what the proposed scope is likely to cost. Start with an overall spending limit, then develop a line-by-line estimate that includes design, plans, permits, labor, materials, project management, temporary living expenses, and a reasonable contingency for unforeseen situations (they happen when we get behind walls). Separate known costs from allowances and unresolved selections so uncertainty remains visible. The purpose of budgeting is not simply to arrive at a number. It is to test whether your vision and scope are realistic before you commit significant time or money.

For most people, the budget is a driver of what your final scope will look like. We would rather pad your numbers for unknowns than have you scrambling for funds to finish a project. You will also want to be clear with your contractor about the process for changes during construction, as changes are the single biggest driver of going over budget.



Cornerstones Continued

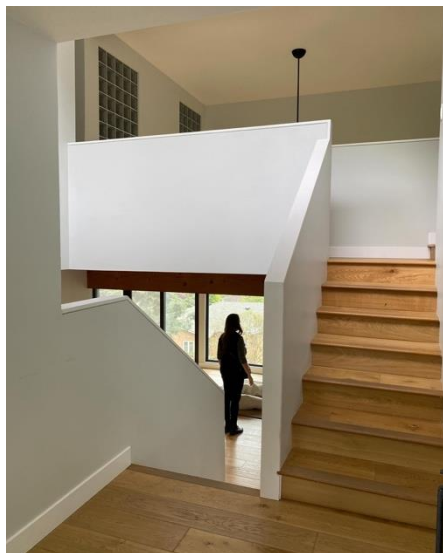
Timeline

A realistic timeline accounts for much more than the days spent under construction. Planning, design, engineering, permits, pricing, material lead times, contractor availability, inspection, and final selections can all affect the schedule. Construction itself must follow a logical sequence, with each trade completing its work before the next stage can begin. Build flexibility into your expectations and consider how delays would affect living arrangements, storage, pets, work, and other household needs. A thoughtful timeline helps you prepare for disruption and make better decisions when conditions change.

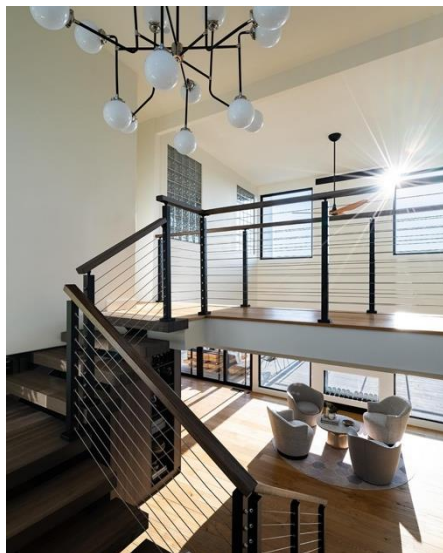
Scope

Your scope translates the vision into a specific description of the work. It should identify which rooms and systems are included, what will be removed or changed, what will remain, which materials and fixtures are expected, and who is responsible for each item. Plans, specifications, selections, and written notes may all become part of the scope. The more clearly the project is defined, the easier it becomes to develop a realistic budget, compare proposals fairly, coordinate the work, and prevent misunderstandings. Your project, your scope, your decisions.

BEFORE



AFTER



Staircase rebuild, Orange County – vision, scope, and timeline planned before demolition began.

Vision



Defining Your Project Vision

Start by envisioning your ideal outcome:

- **Purpose:** What do you want to achieve with the remodel? **Update aesthetics, increase functionality, add space?**
- **Priorities:** Identify your **must-haves** versus **nice-to-haves**.
- **Style Inspiration:** Gather ideas from magazines, websites, or social media platforms like Pinterest to help communicate your vision.
- **Focus on key elements** such as colors, textures, design styles, and specific features you'd like to incorporate.

What **MUST** change (Purpose or Problem to Resolve)?

Describe Your Dream (as if there were no constraints):

When the project is complete, what could be easier, more functional, or enjoyable?

What are your Must-Haves?

What are your Nice-to-Haves? (prioritize with a B or C)

What materials, finishes, fixtures, colors, or features would you like to incorporate?

What already works well or should remain unchanged?

Budget



Establishing a Realistic Budget

Your budget is not simply the amount a contractor quotes. It is a planning tool that helps you decide what is feasible, where your money should go, and which choices will give you the greatest value.

A useful budget develops alongside your scope. As you learn more about the project, you may adjust the scope, the budget, or both. The goal is to make those decisions intentionally before construction begins.

Begin With Three Numbers

1. Your comfortable target

The amount you would prefer to spend while still feeling financially comfortable.

2. Your absolute limit

The maximum amount you are willing and able to invest. This number should not automatically become the construction budget.

3. Your contingency reserve

Money held separately for concealed conditions, necessary changes, and other legitimate surprises. A contingency of 15 to 20 percent is a common starting point. Older homes, incomplete plans, and projects with greater uncertainty may require more, and we recommend never going below 10 percent. The bath and kitchen samples on pages 14 and 15 show the 10 percent minimum inside the construction budget; the page 16 budget has none, so hold yours separately.

Include the Whole Project

Your total project budget may need to account for:

- Planning, design, drafting, and engineering
- Surveys, testing, permits, and city fees
- Demolition and disposal
- Labor, supervision, and project management
- Materials, fixtures, finishes, taxes, and delivery
- Temporary protection, storage, or moving expenses
- Appliances, furnishings, and window coverings
- Temporary housing, additional meals, or pet care
- A contingency reserve

Planning Tip: Do not commit every available dollar to the contractor's proposal. Some project expenses may fall outside the construction contract, and you still need room for uncertainty.

Build the Budget From the Scope

Once you understand what the project needs to accomplish, begin estimating it line by line. Organize costs by room, trade, or phase so you can see where the money is going and make informed adjustments. We are here to help you.

Research Local Costs

General cost-per-square-foot figures can provide context, but they cannot price your specific project. Local labor rates, site conditions, material choices, permit requirements, and the completeness of your scope all affect cost. You may be wondering how the completeness of your scope can impact costs; that is because a contractor may feel the need to budget for unknowns in the absence of available information.

Use early research to test feasibility. As the scope becomes more defined, replace broad estimates with quantities, selections, and comparable proposals.

Account for Plans and Professional Services

Many remodels require drawings for planning, pricing, permitting, or construction. Depending on the project, those drawings may be prepared by a designer, draftsman, architect, engineer, contractor, or homeowner.

Structural changes and specialized systems may require licensed professionals. Confirm the requirements for your particular project with the appropriate local jurisdiction and treat these services as part of the project budget.

Calculate Material Quantities (Takeoffs)

A material takeoff identifies how much of each material the project requires. Quantities should include an appropriate waste factor for cuts, breakage, and pattern matching. Some people like to have some extra material on hand for any future repairs.

For example, a 10-by-12-foot bedroom contains 120 square feet of floor area; with a 15 percent waste factor, the flooring order would be approximately 138 square feet. Base moulding would require approximately 44 linear feet before accounting for doors, waste, and the room's exact configuration.

Make Selections Visible

Unselected materials are often represented by allowances. Record each allowance clearly and determine whether it is realistic for the quality you expect. Also understand that various materials may have different installation difficulty, waste factors, or installation costs.

A bathroom faucet might cost \$30, \$200, or \$3,000. The goal is not automatically to choose the least expensive option; it's to understand the range, identify the features that matter, and make an informed choice.

Decide If and Where DIY Makes Sense for You

While DIY is not for everyone, it’s worth considering because taking on some of the labor when you have the time can reduce costs. Keep in mind that this must be balanced with your available time, skills, tools, and schedule.

Painting trim, installing some kinds of flooring, demolition, and finish installations may be reasonable possibilities for an experienced homeowner or just someone ready to learn some new skills. Electrical, plumbing, HVAC, structural work, and other more technical or skilled trade work may require permits or qualified licensed professionals. Always confirm local requirements and consider the effect on safety, insurance, inspection, warranties, and the construction schedule.

Getting Clear with Your Budget Numbers

Comfortable Target: _____

Contingency Reserve: _____

Absolute Limit: _____

Don’t forget to include costs outside of construction like moving and storage, temporary housing, meals, pet care, new furnishings, window coverings, and a separate contingency here for schedule delays related to your temporary housing costs.

Your Budget Priorities

Where are you willing to invest more?

+

+

Where are you comfortable choosing a simpler or more economical option?

+

+

Are there costs you plan to handle separately from the project budget?

+

+

When the Budget is Tight

Not everyone can take on a five-figure budget, and you do not need one to make a real difference. With time, creativity, and a focus on high-impact items, you can move your home toward the style you want. That might mean using a handyman rather than a contractor, or doing small projects over time to match the budget you have.

A Lot With a Little

- Paint your cabinetry and walls
- Replace countertops and door hardware
- Add new door and drawer fronts in a style you like better
- In a bathroom, swap the vanity, mirror, and medicine cabinet
- Fresh paint alone can go a long way to refresh a space

Notice the transformation of a homeowner's kitchen to the right. She even transformed her backsplash using paint.

Planning Tip: If you plan to paint your cabinets yourself, sand, prime, and then spray for a professional-quality job. Choose an enamel that stands up to the constant use cabinets get, and research the process before you start.

Pricing labor: A worker paid \$30 an hour also carries payroll taxes, insurance, and overhead, which can easily double that rate. On time-and-materials work, ask how long the task should take and how many workers will be on site so you can calculate it yourself.

You can do a lot with a little when you have time and creativity.



Above photos courtesy of Kate at www.housemixblog.com

Budget - Sample Bath

Example budget for a simple bathroom remodel, shown so you can see what the work actually costs and how the pieces stack up. Projects vary in size and complexity, and owners choose to put their money into different things, so use this as a reference for real costs rather than a set of percentages to apply to your own project. This sample assumes the layout stays essentially in place: the shower is rebuilt in its existing footprint and the vanity and toilet remain where they are.

SAMPLE BUDGET – BATHROOM COST BREAKDOWN, \$40,000

Item	Budget	% of Budget
GENERAL & PRE-BUILD		
Permits and Fees (no plans or engineering in this scope)	\$1,200	3%
Demo, Site Protection, Trash, Clean	\$2,000	5%
Contingency (10% minimum – see page 10)	\$4,000	10%
Subtotal General & Pre-Build	\$7,200	18%
BUILDING		
Framing for new shower (curb, pony walls, nooks)	\$1,200	3%
Electrical (Rough and Finish)	\$2,400	6%
Electrical Fixtures (lighting, mirror light, fan)	\$1,600	4%
Plumbing (Rough and Finish)	\$2,800	7%
Plumbing Fixtures (faucet, shower, toilet)	\$2,000	5%
Vanity & Cabinetry	\$2,800	7%
Shower Enclosure & Glass	\$2,000	5%
Accessories & Hardware (mirror, TP and towel bars)	\$800	2%
Tile – Material	\$1,600	4%
Tile Prep and Installation (lath, hot mop, set tile)	\$4,000	10%
Paint	\$1,600	4%
Subtotal Building	\$22,800	57%
PROJECT MANAGEMENT		
Project Supervision	\$6,000	15%
Contractor Fee with Insurance and Overhead	\$4,000	10%
Subtotal Project Management	\$10,000	25%
Total Construction Budget	\$40,000	100%

Budget - Sample Kitchen

Here is a kitchen budget for a normal-sized kitchen in our area – not a compact galley, and not an oversized custom kitchen. It assumes the layout stays essentially in place: cabinets, appliances, and finishes are replaced without moving the sink, range, or walls. Use it to see what each part of the work costs. Projects vary in size and complexity, and owners choose to put their money into different things, so treat this as a reference rather than a formula.

SAMPLE BUDGET - KITCHEN COST BREAKDOWN, \$75,000

Item	Budget	% of Budget
GENERAL & PRE-BUILD		
Permits and Fees (no plans or engineering in this scope)	\$1,500	2%
Demo, Site Protection, Trash, Clean	\$3,750	5%
Contingency (10% minimum – see page 10)	\$7,500	10%
Subtotal General & Pre-Build	\$12,750	17%
BUILDING		
Framing & Blocking (soffit patch, cabinet blocking)	\$750	1%
Drywall Patch and Finish	\$750	1%
Electrical (Rough and Finish)	\$3,000	4%
Electrical Fixtures (recessed, pendants, under-cabinet)	\$1,500	2%
Plumbing (Rough and Finish)	\$1,500	2%
Plumbing Fixtures (sink, faucet, disposal, filtration)	\$1,500	2%
Appliances	\$9,000	12%
Hood & Ventilation (reusing existing duct route)	\$750	1%
Cabinetry	\$12,750	17%
Cabinet Hardware & Organizers	\$750	1%
Countertops	\$5,250	7%
Backsplash – Material	\$750	1%
Backsplash Prep and Installation	\$1,500	2%
Flooring – Material	\$750	1%
Flooring Prep and Installation	\$1,500	2%
Paint	\$1,500	2%
Subtotal Building	\$43,500	58%
PROJECT MANAGEMENT		
Project Supervision	\$11,250	15%
Contractor Fee with Insurance and Overhead	\$7,500	10%
Subtotal Project Management	\$18,750	25%
Total Construction Budget	\$75,000	100%

Budget - Sample Breakdown

Below find a detailed budget for a remodel that involved removing a load-bearing wall, which required engineering, cutting the post-tension slab, and pouring footings; removing a walk-in pantry and relocating plumbing above it; a new custom fireplace wall; locally built, site-finished cabinetry; and wood floors patched and stained to match the existing.

How We Help: Want Low/High ranges like these for your project? Our Feasibility Roadmap builds them before you pay for plans or bids (page 38).

Item	Low	High
GENERAL CONDITIONS		
Plans and Structural Engineering including Permits	\$9,000	\$11,500
Site Protection, Trash, Clean & Punch List	\$5,900	\$7,600
Subtotal General Conditions	\$14,900	\$19,100
BUILDING		
Post Tension X-Ray location service	\$850	\$1,500
Demo - Concrete (around PT, pads, kitchen trench) & Hand Demo	\$9,000	\$11,700
Repour Concrete Foundation	\$3,800	\$5,200
Deputy Inspection Allowance	\$1,000	\$1,400
Lumber & Hardware - Beam/Posts/Columns/Fireplace/Kit Pony Wall/Misc'l	\$9,500	\$12,000
Rough Framing Carpentry Labor to install Lumber & Hardware above	\$12,500	\$15,000
Panel Column Finish	\$7,500	\$9,500
Electrical & Lighting by Electrician (owner to supply fixtures)	\$10,000	\$15,000
Electrical Fixtures	\$4,500	\$8,500
Drywall	\$5,000	\$8,000
Custom Fireplace Wall Cabinetry	\$12,000	\$15,000
Fireplace Wall Cabinet Finish	\$2,800	\$3,200
Linear Fireplace, Flue & Cap - Product material and installation	\$15,000	\$18,000
Fireplace Surround - Ledger Stone (includes \$25 psf material allowance)	\$7,800	\$9,200
Fireplace Hearth Slab (includes \$75 psf material allowance)	\$3,200	\$3,800
Plumbing & Appliances		
Gas, Waste & Water Lines - set and finish	\$3,000	\$3,600
Appliance Installation - by others - Allowance	\$2,200	\$2,500
Plumbing Fixtures and Appliances provided by owner	\$6,000	\$26,000
Kitchen Cabinetry	\$38,000	\$46,000
Tile Backsplash - Kitchen (includes \$45 psf material allowance)	\$3,400	\$4,200
Stone Countertops (bookend matched custom)	\$19,900	\$22,500
Finish Carpentry - Interior Base & Crown Moulding	\$4,500	\$5,700
Flooring	\$7,500	\$9,500
Painting	\$2,500	\$4,500
Subtotal Building	\$191,450	\$261,500
PROJECT MANAGEMENT		
Project Supervision	\$15,316	\$20,920
Project Management & Office Overhead	\$3,829	\$5,230
Insurance	\$5,744	\$7,845
Contractor Fee	\$28,718	\$39,225
Subtotal Project Management	\$53,606	\$73,220
Total Construction Budget	\$259,956	\$353,820

Timeline



Essential Drivers of Your Timeline

To understand your timeline, there are two main factors to consider. The first is lead times on materials and the second is the specialists who will do the work. The larger your remodel, the more professionals you will need to schedule, and the more time things will take due to days between trades. Tradespeople will often work hard to accommodate your scheduling needs, but if they're good at the job, they are in demand and harder to schedule with little notice. That's why keeping them in the loop on how your project is progressing can be critical to having their schedule align with the other trades. Be aware that some things can take longer than projected, especially when opening walls and potentially finding issues you must now add to your scope of work. You will need to remain flexible and do your best to give your tradespeople ample notice on when you'd like them to start. If you ever need to have two trades working at the same time, be sure to communicate with both in order to avoid any issues.

Order of Operations

There is an order to how to proceed with any remodel and it involves layers. For example, you need to work from the foundation up and from behind walls out. Before you can do anything, you will want to have critical components on hand, like windows, doors, and the mixing valve for a shower (since it goes in the wall behind the tile). It's also helpful to know exactly where you want to locate lights, outlets, and other fixtures requiring electrical boxes, extra supports, drains, or plumbing stub-outs. A stub-out is any area where a hot or cold water line comes out of the wall while an electrical box is anywhere you have an electrical switch or fixture. Keep in mind that different fixtures will have different needs in terms of space and how they're installed.

What to Expect Overall

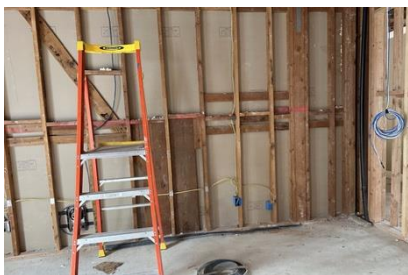
Planning: 2 weeks to 3 or more months

A planning phase is critical – the more complex the project, the longer this will take. We advise allowing 2 weeks to 3+ months for design, permits, and contractor/tradesperson selections. This will also allow you to begin obtaining longer-lead materials, fixtures, or other components you want to incorporate into your design.

Execution: **A bathroom** could take **1-6 weeks**, **a kitchen** **2-8 weeks**, and **a major remodel** **3-6 months** or longer.

As with the budget, it's best to allow for the unexpected and be flexible. Your tradespeople know that things come up. Keeping everyone in the loop on progress will help everyone to efficiently schedule their part. It's also critical to keep this in mind if you've relocated for the renovation process.

Unexpected Impacts



Are You Ready for Disruption?

There is nothing quite like the disruption that construction in your personal space brings. We strongly recommend that people move out of their homes while construction is underway, but it's not always realistic or in the budget. If you do plan to move out, make sure you budget for any additional costs depending on where you will stay. These costs may include eating out, if you won't have access to your kitchen.

Separate Your Space

If you must stay in your home, you must separate your space from the job site area. If you need to make a temp kitchen, set that up in another part of your home. Consider adding a temp wall to your space with a zipper closure between you and the construction zone. Anything you can do to separate your personal space from the work area will help you maintain your sanity throughout the remodel process.

Personal Items

Pack up everything you can to protect it even if you're staying in your home during the remodel. Not only can you prevent it from being covered in fine construction dust, but you are also keeping it safe. Construction is messy under the best of conditions, and your contractor and/or subcontractors should not be made responsible for your furniture or personal items, so you must get them out of the way completely and that includes all paths to and from the construction zone. Keep in mind that you will need to provide a "staging area" both inside for storage of materials and tools and an outside area where they will process those materials using saws and equipment.

Access to Your Home

It should go without saying that contractors and subcontractors must have access to the job site. Having restrictions can and will cause large hits to your timeline. It's already difficult for them to schedule their crews to keep everyone busy and productive, so limiting your project in this way can have a devastating impact. Consider buying a lockbox with a code so everyone who needs to be working can get inside.

Pets

Understand that your pets will also be impacted by the disruption and make a plan to keep them safe and out of the way. Even the most lovable pet can put workers and themselves at risk for injury by being present on a job site. Avoid making workers responsible for your pet's safety and security.

Planning Your Project Timeline

A realistic timeline includes planning, design, engineering, permits, pricing, selections, ordering, contractor availability, construction, inspections, and closeout (also known as the punch list).

You can identify your priorities and constraints now. Once the scope is defined and permits are obtained, work with your contractor and other service providers to establish the detailed construction schedule.

This is also the time to identify and order materials that may have longer lead times. This can include custom items, materials that must be fabricated, even finish items or fixtures that may take some time to arrive. Ensure you have a place to put these things while other work is being completed as well.

Important Dates

Is there a date you wish the project to be completed by (holiday, birthday, celebration)?

Are there periods of time when work cannot take place in the home?

After planning and permits, are there any dates that could affect construction?

Project Readiness

You have determined your priorities and your budget; now it's time to finalize the scope with a basic understanding of the timeline and dates you're working with. Remember, much of the timeline can be completed prior to anyone lifting a hammer in your home by ensuring you have solid plans, designs, drawings, specifications, and have identified the specific materials you will use. You may even have begun ordering some longer lead or custom items and know where you can store them before they're needed.

Note that your contractor may need a staging area for materials to be worked on or assembled outside of the space, they may need a bathroom, water access via hose, etc.

Establishing the Schedule with Your Team

Schedule Coordination

Communication will be key. Ask your contractor or project manager:

- What must happen before work can begin?
- What is the expected construction duration for the defined scope?
 - This also means multiple subcontractors whose work may depend on another trade. (For example, drywall can't proceed until electrical and plumbing are done.)
- Which decisions or materials are schedule dependent?
 - This is your opportunity to ensure you have made decisions and acquired materials in a timely manner so you are not the one causing delays.
- Which phases depend on inspections or other approvals?
 - This is generally outlined during the permitting process.
- Which portions of the work have the greatest scheduling uncertainty and how can we mitigate that?
- How much flexibility or buffer is included?
- Who will update the schedule, and how often will progress be reviewed?

Identify YOUR priorities

- ☐ Earliest possible start
- ☐ Shortest practical construction period
- ☐ Working with a preferred contractor
- ☐ Waiting for preferred materials
- ☐ Remaining in the home
- ☐ Minimizing disruption
- ☐ Completing the project by a specific date
- ☐ Maintaining flexibility for unexpected conditions

Planning Tip: A desired completion date is not yet a construction schedule. The schedule becomes meaningful after the scope is defined, requirements are understood, important selections are made, and the availability of the people performing the work has been confirmed. From here, you can establish line-item dependencies that drive your timeline, but even then, be prepared for the unexpected.

DATES AND DEPENDENCIES TO CONFIRM

Scope

Now that you've taken the time to refine your vision, identify your must-haves and nice-to-haves, and align these with your budget and schedule, it's time to define the scope of your project. The scope should clearly outline which areas of your home you want to remodel and specify the changes you plan to make. By narrowing your focus, you can create a roadmap that will guide you through a successful remodel.

A well-defined project scope is the cornerstone of success. Through the earlier exercises, you've honed in on your priorities, balancing your vision with practical considerations like budget and timelines. These three elements (vision, budget, and timelines) serve as the foundation for your project scope. The budget determines what is financially feasible, while the timeline establishes realistic expectations for tasks and milestones. Together, these elements, supported by planning tools such as blueprints and detailed notes, come together to form a clear, actionable plan.

In some cases, it may be beneficial to break your project into phases. This approach allows you to minimize disruption to your daily life and manage your budget more effectively. For example, dividing a large-scale remodel into smaller stages can help you achieve steady progress while maintaining control over costs and resources. Phased projects also provide flexibility, giving you the chance to adapt and refine your plans as new insights emerge. This way, you can make adjustments without losing sight of your overall vision.

By taking the time to thoughtfully define your project scope, you are setting yourself up for success. With a clear plan in hand, you'll be better equipped to navigate the remodeling process and turn your vision into reality.



A well-defined project scope is the cornerstone of success.

Complete the Scope

Scope can be defined by all of the activities and materials that will go into completing your project. All the planning, drawings, engineering, documents, permits, and material selections go into what we refer to as the Scope of your project.

Identify Responsibilities

Who will purchase each material, fixture, or appliance?

Who will receive, inspect, store, and install it?

Will the homeowner complete any portion of the work?

Will any work require plans, engineering, permits, inspections, or a specialized professional?

Access and Protection

What areas must be protected during construction?

How will workers access the project and store tools or materials?

Will utilities need to be temporarily disconnected?

Clarify the Boundaries

What is specifically included in the project?

What is specifically excluded?

What assumptions are being made that still need to be confirmed?

Which decisions must be made before pricing?

Which decisions can wait until after construction begins, and when must they be finalized?

Room-by-Room Scope Worksheet

Complete one worksheet for each room or area. Work item by item: name what exists now, what you plan to do with it, and what it will become. Use the Planned Work terms below so your contractor reads your scope the same way you do.

ROOM OR AREA

PRIMARY GOAL FOR THIS AREA

PLANNED WORK TERMS

- Keep** – stays as is; protect it during construction
- Protect** – stays, but needs covering or temporary removal
- Remove** – demolished or hauled away and not replaced
- Repair** – fixed in place rather than replaced
- Refinish** – surface renewed: paint, refinish, reface
- Relocate** – same item, new position
- Replace** – removed and replaced with a new item
- Install New** – added where nothing exists today

Planning Tip: If an item has not been selected, do not leave it out. Name it, assign an allowance if appropriate, and record when the decision must be made.

NOTES, QUESTIONS, OR DECISIONS TO CONFIRM

Room-by-Room Scope Worksheet

One row per item. Copy this page for each additional room.

ROOM OR AREA

PRIMARY GOAL FOR THIS AREA

Item	Planned work	Product or allowance	Who buys & installs	Decision deadline	Status

Beware of Scope Creep

What Is Scope Creep?

Scope creep happens when new ideas, extra tasks, or changes are introduced after the project has started – often without evaluating their impact on:

- Project Scope (Does this align with the original plan?)
- Budget (Do you want to allocate the additional funds for this?)
- Timeline (Will this delay completion?)

While some changes may seem small, they can quickly lead to increased costs, extended timelines, and unnecessary stress.

How to Avoid Scope Creep

- Stick to your original scope. Your plan was carefully crafted based on your vision, budget, and timeline.
- Prioritize changes. If an adjustment is necessary, evaluate how it affects the overall project by communicating with your team.
- Discuss every change with your contractor or subcontractors. Before approving modifications, consider:
 - Cost Implications
 - Timeline Adjustments
 - Whether the change aligns with the original goals

Planning Tip: Small changes can snowball into major disruptions. Keep a contingency fund for true necessities rather than wish-list additions.

Managing Unavoidable Changes

If changes are necessary:

- Work with your contractor and subs to adjust the project scope formally.
- Request an updated budget breakdown for approval.
- Ensure all changes are documented in writing.

If new ideas arise:

- Compare them against your must-haves list.
- Assess whether they are worth delaying your project timeline and adding to your budget.

If an urgent condition affects safety or could cause additional damage, make the site safe first. Document the condition and agree on the remaining work as soon as practical.



Managing Changes Along the Way

Understand each contractor or subcontractor's change order process and make sure they are willing to be clear with you about impacts to the price or schedule as issues come up during construction.

If you have estimates from the contractor prior to permitting, changes can come up to pricing or schedule before work even starts as a result of engineering, code compliance, or alterations identified during the plan review process.

The sooner you can identify the need for a change, the less likely it is to negatively impact your budget or the schedule and the more options you may have to mitigate the impacts of a necessary change.

Changes to the project are most likely to come from two things. The first driver of change is you, the homeowner. As you see opportunities during the construction process, you will be tempted to ask about changing things. Before you direct anything to be different than the plans, you should ensure you understand the impacts to the budget and schedule. The second source of change will be things that were either unknown and need to be addressed or ideas brought to you by your contractors or subs. In either case, be sure to clearly communicate with your contractor and subs that any changes that impact the cost or schedule should be approved by you in writing as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, schedule slips and even budget hits can be unavoidable. The key is to have a process with your contractor and subs on how this will be communicated, managed, and approved. Many contractors have a process in place for this that you'll want to become familiar with. You should understand that there are some service providers and handy-people whose talents are in their finished work and not in managing a project, so when you ask them to change or alter their work, make sure to ask if there would be an associated impact to the budget or timeline and work with them to understand those impacts.

A Clear Change Order Process

1. Change is Identified – A requested revision, concealed condition, or necessary correction is discovered.
2. Scope is Defined – Document exactly what will change, why it's needed, and what is affected.
3. Cost and Schedule are Evaluated – The contractor provides the additional cost, any credits, and the effect on the construction schedule.
4. Owner Reviews and Approves – The change order documentation is approved in writing and communicated to all impacted parties before the additional work proceeds.
5. Budget and Schedule Get Updated – Add the approved change to the project records and adjust the remaining budget, contingency, and timeline.
6. Work is Completed and Documented – Complete the revised work and retain the signed change order with invoices, selections, and project records.

Don't Forget Details

Here are some details that are easy to forget but could impact your remodel if you don't consider them.

Bathroom

- Moulding & Trim (especially at transitions between surface materials like tile to drywall, corners of tile, and where/how materials will terminate into other surfaces).
- How will the corners of your tile areas be finished?
 - Edge tile, pencil tile, or metal edging?
- Selections that will dictate rough framing, plumbing, or electrical
 - Medicine Cabinet
 - Shower Valve – including placement of shower heads, hand-helds, or other features
 - Type of faucet and vanity so plumbing will be placed correctly
 - Light-up Mirrors
 - Light fixture placement
 - Door Stops and other miscellaneous hardware

Kitchen

- Moulding & Trim plus how different materials will meet (for example, trim above cabinets meeting the ceiling or a countertop terminating into a cabinet panel)
- Appliance specs for required hook-ups, fit, usability, and flow throughout the space while appliances are in use (traffic flow)
 - Having your appliances selected and purchased in advance will help dictate your cabinet plans
 - Keep your spec sheets for appliances printed and on-site so professionals can accommodate them.
- End panels throughout the space
- Where will your trash & recycling bins go?
- Ventilation type and size to work with your stove
- Storage for countertop appliances
- Coffee/drink station access?
 - Can it be accessed while someone is doing food prep?
- Kitchen Seating
 - Be sure there is room to walk easily behind where someone may be seated
- Ensure you know what fixtures you will be using
 - Have spec sheets for fixtures printed and on-site so professionals can accommodate them.
- Make sure any doors open clear of work stations or cabinetry doors.

We have included checklists on the following two pages to consider.

Bathroom Planning Checklist

Many finish-stage choices affect framing, plumbing, electrical work, ventilation, blocking, or clearances. Decide as much as possible before the walls close.

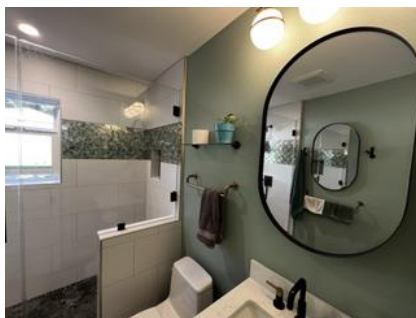
- ☐ Confirm shower and tub dimensions, clearances, and entry space.
- ☐ If using a freestanding tub, allow room to clean behind and around it.
- ☐ Select the shower valve, head, handheld, niche, bench, and drain location.
- ☐ Decide whether controls should be reachable from outside the spray.
- ☐ Choose vanity and faucet types so plumbing lands in the correct location.
- ☐ Plan the shower enclosure and glass type, including door swing and hardware.
- ☐ Coordinate mirror size with sconces, outlets, medicine cabinets, and backsplash height.
- ☐ Layer lighting for general use, the shower, and grooming. Consider eye-level lighting or a lighted mirror.
- ☐ Consider outlets inside drawers or cabinets for charging and grooming tools.
- ☐ Decide whether USB or specialty outlets are useful.
- ☐ Add blocking for accessories, wall-mounted fixtures, or future grab bars.
- ☐ Confirm ventilation size, duct route, and control location.

Planning Tip: Keep fixture specifications on site so the work can be checked before the walls close.

BEFORE



AFTER



Bathroom remodel, Orange County. Walk-in shower relocated to improve the functionality of the bathroom.

Kitchen Planning Checklist

A kitchen depends on coordinated decisions about cabinetry, appliances, plumbing, electrical work, ventilation, lighting, and clearances. Resolve these items before rough-in whenever possible.

- ☐ Obtain appliance specifications before cabinetry, plumbing, and electrical rough-in.
- ☐ Check cord lengths. Many appliance cords are short, so outlet placement must be intentional.
- ☐ Plan enough countertop outlets for how you actually cook, even if that exceeds minimum code requirements.
- ☐ Consider under-cabinet outlets when you want an uninterrupted backsplash.
- ☐ Decide how island power will be provided, including side outlets or an approved pop-up option.
- ☐ Plan lighting in layers: general, task, under-cabinet, island, and decorative lighting.
- ☐ Test the work triangle, paths of travel, seating clearances, and open appliance doors.
- ☐ Leave adequate working space in front of the refrigerator and other appliances.
- ☐ Locate outlets for small appliances, charging, beverage stations, and appliances stored in cabinets.
- ☐ Confirm sink, faucet, filtration, disposal, dishwasher, and refrigerator water connections.
- ☐ Coordinate hood size, ventilation route, make-up air requirements, and cabinetry.
- ☐ Review where countertops, backsplash, cabinetry, trim, and end panels meet.
- ☐ Confirm cabinet box material, drawer slide type, and hinge quality before comparing bids.
- ☐ Confirm lighting meets Title 24 energy requirements, including high-efficacy fixtures and controls.

Planning Tip: Keep appliance and fixture specifications on site so the work can be checked before the walls close.



Completed kitchen: all-new layout, cabinetry, lighting, and appliances.

Choosing the Right Team

DIY vs. General Contractor

Now is the time to decide how you want to manage your remodel:

- **General Contractor (GC):** Manages all aspects of the project, including subcontractor coordination, permitting, and scheduling. (Verify responsibilities with your GC.)
- **DIY Project Management:** You take on the responsibility of hiring and managing trades, ordering materials, and ensuring quality control.
- **Hybrid Approach:** Use consulting services (like Master Build Advisor) to guide you while taking on only as much as you're comfortable with.

If you need design expertise or help selecting appropriate materials for your project, you might also consider working with an interior designer to enhance your remodel's overall look and functionality. This is especially helpful if you're rearranging your layout.

Selecting Team Members

When choosing contractors, subcontractors, and tradespeople, prioritize:

- Strong communication skills and a willingness to collaborate
- Openness, honesty, and the ability to set clear expectations
- A working style that aligns with your comfort level
- Clear, detailed proposals or bids
- Licensing and insurance verification
- References and past work matter, but don't overlook communication. A contractor who communicates clearly, documents expectations, and works collaboratively can prevent many of the problems that arise during construction.

Getting Bids & Understanding Scope

- Share project plans with potential contractors to ensure accurate pricing.
- Expect site visits; most bids require an in-person assessment to account for site conditions (e.g., access and workspace).
- Clarify bid details:
 - What's included vs. what you're responsible for (e.g., materials)?
 - Payment schedule and expected costs outside of the bid.
 - Timeline for completion.

Planning Tip: A vague or unclear bid can lead to disputes later. Ensure every contractor outlines their responsibilities clearly.

How We Help: Send us your bids. We review each proposal against your scope for \$195 per bid, so you compare contractors on the same terms (page 38).

Choosing the Right Team

CONTINUED

Clear Written Agreements

- Contracts should include:
 - Detailed scope of work
 - Payment schedule and terms
 - The “schedule” is about what tasks are completed, not necessarily just what day it is.
 - Timeline expectations
 - Warranties or guarantees (if applicable)
- Deposits: In California, the legal limit for upfront payments is \$1,000 or 10% of the project cost to that specific contractor (whichever is lower).
- Payment Process: Never pay ahead of work completion. Pay promptly once work is verified.

Planning Tip: Read contracts carefully – don’t sign until you fully understand the terms. If something is unclear, ask for clarification before proceeding.

Other Professionals to Consider

Depending on the complexity of your remodel, you may need additional professionals to ensure a successful project:

- **Interior Designer** – Helps refine your vision, choose finishes, and create a cohesive design that maximizes both function and aesthetics. They are particularly helpful in maximizing value for kitchens, bathrooms, and whole-home remodels.
- **Architect** – Often needed for major structural changes, additions, or custom home designs. Architects create detailed plans and ensure compliance with building codes. You can also hire drafters for this work if you know what you want.
- **Structural Engineer** – Often required for load-bearing wall modifications, foundation work, additions, and other significant structural changes. Your local jurisdiction or design professional can confirm when engineering calculations are required.
- **Permit Expediter** – If your remodel requires complex permitting, hiring a permit expeditor can streamline the approval process and prevent delays.
- **Home Energy Consultant** – Can provide insight into improving energy efficiency, selecting better insulation, or incorporating solar and sustainable options into your project. They can also help with meeting California’s Title 24 requirements.

Planning Tip: While some general contractors have design or engineering professionals they have successfully worked with on projects, others will expect you to bring in outside professionals. Determine early on whether your GC, designer, or external consultant will handle specific tasks and oversee others.

Material Takeoffs

What Is a Takeoff?

Takeoffs are measurements to account for how much material will be installed, as well as how much material you need to purchase by accounting for the waste factor. For example, if you're doing flooring, you should measure your space and calculate the square footage of the flooring.

Why Waste Is Not Optional

When purchasing most materials, you should plan (and budget) to add "waste". This is 100% necessary because when you install a material, you'll never be able to install 100% of each piece, and waste allows you to discard any pieces that are damaged or less appealing. Natural materials may require more waste calculated into your purchase due to natural variations. A good example of this includes solid wood flooring. If you get "utility grade" flooring, you can expect at least a 25% waste factor, whereas if you purchase "A" grade wood, you'll probably be okay with 10%. Most manufacturers or subcontractors can advise on the waste factor you should use when purchasing material.

Using Plans to Calculate Takeoffs

If you have an official set of plans, this is a great resource for calculating your takeoffs. Most materials will require this, from tile and siding to drywall and even paint. That said, remember that your contractor and subs will still need to evaluate the "site conditions" when providing an estimate, because site conditions can add substantially to their labor in some circumstances. With a set of plans, we offer takeoff and estimation services. For larger projects, this becomes essential in understanding your budget and how it relates to the bids you will get from your subcontractors.

Have Your Subcontractors Do Their Own

It is essential to have your subcontractors do their own takeoffs rather than relying on your calculations. When their numbers differ from yours, that is an opportunity to catch issues and clear up problems before work is done and money is spent. It also serves as a sanity check on the bids you receive. Be ready to use the information you have to ask questions and clarify your scope ahead of time.

If a subcontractor's quantities differ from yours, don't assume either number is wrong. Ask how they calculated theirs. Differences often reveal assumptions, site conditions, waste factors, or scope items that need clarification. Approach the conversation with curiosity rather than accusation; jumping to conclusions can damage your project. A successful remodel is based on open and clear communication – always seek to understand first.

How We Help: Our Contractor Ready Planning Package includes material takeoffs, so every bid is priced from the same quantities (page 38).

Materials Lists

Once your scope is detailed and you understand your takeoffs (how much of each material you'll need), it's time to list those items and begin gathering them. This is another reason we recommend an indoor "staging area": you will need to store materials, and some items take up a lot of space.

Lead Time

Lead time is the amount of time you will need to wait to receive an item after it is ordered. A key to keeping your timeline on track is making sure you have all your items on hand before they are needed. If an item goes "out of stock," you may find yourself scrambling to find a comparable item to complete your project, so planning and ordering ahead is advisable for the following:

- Plumbing fixtures like faucets, shower systems, pot fillers, toilets, etc.
- Lighting
- Cabinetry
- Any items that will be "built-in"
- Stone slabs (if you're looking for a specialty material)
- Anything custom (custom items will take the longest because they're made according to specifications you designate, so allow 6+ weeks)
- Appliances
- Finish details and accessories
- Custom trim (or make sure the moulding plan includes pieces that are readily available from a big-box store)

Keep in mind that the above list is just a guideline and that even the most mundane of materials can be difficult to get if you want a customized product or one that isn't readily available in your market.

Items you probably don't need to worry about having on hand, because your subcontractor will likely provide them, include:

- Drywall (although think about options like sound deadening or fire-rated products and call those options out if required for your project)
- Insulation (discuss options with your subcontractor for this)
- Rough-in wires and plumbing material (wire and pipes)
- Cement
- Recessed lighting (although call out specialty items, colors, and trims)

Keep in mind that even if your subcontractor is supplying items, if you have called out non-standard materials, you need to let them know well in advance so they can account for necessary lead times or additional costs for those items.

How to Pay Your Contractor

Know the Law (California-Specific and Best Practices for Other States)

- **California law** prohibits contractors from accepting more than \$1,000 or 10% of the project cost (whichever is lower) as a deposit.
- **Best practice nationwide:** Avoid large upfront payments – pay as little as possible before work begins to protect yourself from bad actors and financially irresponsible contractors.

Payment Timing & Protecting Yourself

- Keep payments aligned with milestones. Avoid paying ahead of completed work.
- For material purchases, when possible pay once materials are received.
- Never pay ahead of completion – hold back a reasonable percentage for unfinished work.
- **Paying Subcontractors: What to Expect**
 - Subcontractors often pay out-of-pocket for materials and labor before invoicing you.
 - Pay promptly when invoiced for work completed – aim for **24 hours** if possible after verifying the work.

How to Handle Partial Work Completion

If a subcontractor's work is done in stages, split payments accordingly:

- Example: Your electrician bids \$10,000 for a full job.
 - After rough wiring is complete, pay 80% and hold back 20% until final installation (switches, outlets, and fixtures).
 - Adjust invoices if work is incomplete – ask for a breakdown of what has been done vs. what remains and work with your subcontractors on how to break it down.

Handling Disputes & Overcharges

- If a subcontractor invoices for more work than was completed:
 - Communicate with them to **hold back a fair amount**, not the entire payment.
 - **Ask questions and seek clarity** – assume good intentions and discuss the discrepancy.
- If additional work is required:
 - **Agree on a price before the work is done.**
 - Ensure all changes are documented in writing.

Payment & Communication Go Hand-in-Hand

- If a subcontractor fails to communicate scope changes, be proactive in asking about the impact of those changes.
- Unless you know for sure otherwise, assume good intentions. There is a lot going on with any remodel, and miscommunications happen.

Protect Yourself From Mechanics Liens

Unpaid subcontractors and suppliers can place a lien on your home even if you paid your contractor. Keep every Preliminary Notice you receive. Before each payment, collect a conditional lien release from your contractor and anyone who sent a notice; after payment, collect unconditional releases. You may withhold the next payment until releases for the previous one are provided. Details at cslb.ca.gov.

Monitoring Progress

Regular Inspections: Why & How

Inspecting your project regularly is crucial, but keep in mind the order of progress – some things may appear incomplete simply because it's not time yet. There are two main types of inspections you'll encounter during your remodel.

City Inspections

City inspections are tied to your permits. A municipal inspector will check compliance at key stages but only for code adherence – not quality. While they may flag issues related to code compliance, they won't assess workmanship. If you ask for an opinion, they may not provide one. Their role is to confirm the work meets building codes, not to judge its quality.

Typical inspections (check with your building department for specifics in your area):

- Cement Forms
- Structural Cement (which may also require a special inspector to observe and sample)
- Framing
- Roofing (various stages)
- Insulation
- Rough Electrical & Plumbing
- Hot Mop (shower pan waterproofing)
- Lath (for stucco or tile waterproofing)
- Drywall (type and secure installation)
- Final Inspection

It's often helpful to have the subcontractor “sit the inspection” – meaning they wait for and meet with the inspector – but it's also valuable to be there.

Quality Inspections

Separate from city inspections, quality control is up to you and your General Contractor. Every layer beneath the surface (framing, foundation, plumbing, wiring) affects the final result. If you're acting as your own GC, you can find tutorials on inspecting work from various trades, but it's best to meet with the subcontractors beforehand to set expectations, review timelines, and coordinate return visits (since many trades need to work in phases).

Final fixture placement (cabinets, lighting, switches) is dependent on work done before drywall, so inspect early. If you're unsure how to proceed with this critical piece, consider hiring a home inspector who specializes in homeowner remodels.

Planning Tip: Tie both city and quality inspections to payment schedules to ensure accountability and make certain that you are not paying ahead of work being completed.

Resolving Issues

Communication is Key

As we've outlined, communication with your contractors is critical every step of the way, but the absolute most important time to ensure clear communication is before you begin your project when you can outline everything in writing. Utilize contracts that also call out your building plans and state that work will be completed professionally. Still, even in the best of circumstances, miscommunications do happen and unexpected things do come up. This is why it's critical to work with professionals you have a good rapport with. Both you and your contractors must understand that you're on the same team, with the goal being a successful remodel. Never assume they don't want to resolve an issue; instead, ask questions that will allow them to suggest solutions.

De-escalation amid Strong Emotions

When an issue comes up and needs to be resolved, emotions can run high. When things get heated, workable solutions are much harder to find. The best thing you can do is move away from the topic or move away physically, knowing you'll need to return to the conversation once cooler heads prevail. Come back to the discussion in a format and at a time when everyone can put their emotions aside. Assess the issue realistically: a) Is there something in writing about this specific issue, b) Did you discuss it ahead of time, c) Were assumptions made, and what were they, d) Is the quality simply not up to accepted professional standards?

Answering these questions clarifies what was agreed and what the next conversation should focus on. If something was documented or approved by you, resolving it may mean a change order. You can either accept the result or pay to have it changed. If the issue falls within the contractor's responsibility, it may still be worth accepting the result to keep your project moving. This will depend on the specific issue and how large its impact is. Even if you are adamant that your contractor remedy the issue by doing rework, your timeline will be pushed out as a result. Finding a workable way forward with your team usually leads to the best outcome, even if that means they step away from the project. Unfortunately, it can be very difficult to find another professional willing to finish someone else's work.

Third-Party Resolution

If you and a member of your team reach an impasse, put your concern in writing, reference the contract, plans, and change orders, and give the contractor a clear opportunity to respond. If that doesn't resolve it, outside resources include:

1. File a claim with the contractor's insurance provider (you should have received a copy of their insurance when you signed a contract with them)
2. File a complaint with the Contractors State License Board (CSLB), which may offer mediation or arbitration
3. Small claims court, for claims up to \$12,500 for individuals (\$6,250 for businesses). Each option takes time. For questions about your legal rights, consult a qualified attorney.

The Next Step is Yours

You now have the framework: a clear vision for what the remodel needs to accomplish, a budget built on three numbers, a realistic view of the timeline, and a room-by-room scope. That puts you ahead of where many projects begin.

The next step is to finish defining the project before you pay for design or sign a construction contract. Work through the worksheets, fill in the gaps, and write down the decisions that are still open.

If you want a second set of eyes, start with the free 20-minute call on the next page. Our planning is independent: you can take your finished plan to any contractor, or, once planning is complete, schedule a consultation with one of our experienced construction project managers.

Before You Move On: Your Planning Checklist

- ☐ **Vision:** the problems to solve, must-haves, and nice-to-haves, written down
- ☐ **Budget:** your comfortable target, contingency reserve, and absolute limit
- ☐ **Scope:** a room-by-room list of what changes, what stays, and who handles each item
- ☐ **Timeline:** target dates, plus a plan for living arrangements during construction
- ☐ **Open decisions:** selections still to make and long-lead items to order early
- ☐ **Questions:** what you will ask each designer or contractor before you hire



Plan First with MBA

Start With a Free 20-Minute Call

There is no charge and no obligation. Bring your worksheets from this guide, a set of plans, a contractor's proposal, or nothing but questions. We will talk through what you are trying to accomplish, where the real risks are in your project, and what the smallest useful next step looks like. These calls are open to anyone – whether you hire MBA, hire someone else, or run the project entirely yourself.

- Schedule your call at calendly.com/masterbuildadvisor/letstalk

Why Start With Planning

Planning is the part of a remodel nobody sees and everybody pays for. Many contractors skip it entirely, or reuse the same plan on every house they touch. Master Build Advisor is independent planning: your project, your scope, your decisions, settled before estimates and contracts start driving the conversation.

Choose the Level of Clarity Your Project Needs

Project Walkthrough & Initial Planning – \$495 to \$695. An experienced set of eyes before you commit to a direction, designer, or contractor. On-site walkthrough, visible systems review, early issue identification, photos, notes, and a 30-minute follow-up call.

Comprehensive Feasibility Roadmap – \$895 to \$1,295. Everything in the walkthrough, plus a room-by-room scope outline, rough budget ranges, likely system upgrades, permit triggers, and a high-level timeline.

Contractor Ready Planning Package – starting at \$4,995. As-built documentation, professional construction drawings, engineering and permit coordination as needed, material takeoffs, and independent cost input – documentation contractors can price apples to apples.

Focused Consultation & Review – \$195 per hour. Guidance exactly where you need it: what-if analysis, contractor proposal review at \$195 per bid, LiDAR floor plans, and permit research.

Planning It Yourself Does Not Mean Doing It Alone

Owner-builders and hands-on homeowners stay in charge. We review plans, test costs, evaluate proposals, help you vet contractors and trades, and work through hard decisions without taking control away from you.

Construction: once a full plan is in place and you love it, building it may be available through BristolCo – discussed separately, and never a condition of planning with MBA.

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