

Living With Your Remodeling Project

Adapting To Your Home as a Work Site

You've researched, interviewed, and hired the best remodeler for the job.

Congratulations! The only step that remains, of course, is the project itself.

Having your home remodeled is uniquely different from having a new home built.

With remodeling, your home becomes the worksite. You live side-by-side with the project from start to finish. Once construction begins, you'll probably long for simple pleasures like a dust free home or a fully functioning kitchen or bath. But the end result will be well worth these inconveniences.

The rest of this section is designed to ensure that you arrive there with your sanity intact.

Communication

Consistent and open communication between you and your remodeler will enhance your understanding of the project, provide an opportunity to exchange ideas, and ultimately help to make the experience a positive one for everyone involved.

To facilitate this process, you need to:

- Determine who you and your remodeler should contact for daily decisions or an after-hours emergency. For example, your contact may be the lead carpenter for the job, while the remodeler's contact could be your spouse.
- Designate a backup for each contact person to assure continuity in anyone's absence.
- Create a place in your house where the contact persons can leave messages for each other (a securely anchored notebook is a good idea since it is less likely to disappear).

- Speak up. If you are uncertain about any aspect of the project, be sure to let the contact person know.

The Pre-Construction Meeting:

One way to ensure the success of your project is to plan for and actively participate in a preconstruction meeting. This allows your remodeler to clarify procedures and explain how the job will progress. It also offers both you and your remodeler an opportunity to prepare for those issues that may arise later. You should think of this meeting as a forum for all participants to define their expectations and agree on the anticipated outcome.

Some of the issues you may wish to cover at this meeting include:

- Will you allow your remodeler to place a company sign on your property? Remember that, in addition to being a marketing tool, signs help contractors and suppliers locate your home.
- How will workers, construction equipment, and vehicles get to the job site without damaging outside structures, plants, and flower beds?
- What areas of your home will be off limits to workers?
- Do you have a place on site to store building materials for your project?
- Who is responsible for removing your belongings and later returning them to the newly remodeled space? When packing, remember that the workers may need access to the electrical panel, the water shut-off valve, and areas not being remodeled.
- Does your house have an alarm system? Will workers need a key or will someone always be there?
- How will you ensure that your children and pets stay out of the work space?
- Does the space to be remodeled contain any special items that you would like to save from demolition? If so, where should they be stored?
- How will trash removal be handled? Where will the remodeler locate the Dumpster on your property?

- Does the remodeler anticipate any interruptions of utilities during the project? If so, when and for how long? At certain stages of construction, the project may affect basic household necessities like water and electricity. Will you need to vacate the house at any time?
- What are your expectations regarding clean up? Will sweeping be sufficient for a daily cleaning, or will you need a more thorough cleaning in order to use the space?

You should also use the pre-construction meeting to establish guidelines for the remodeling crew working on the project:

- What times will workers begin and end work at your home? Be sure to consider the neighbors as well as household members. Your remodeler may contact your neighbors and give them a phone number to call if they have any concerns about your project.
- Where can workers park near your job site?
- Will you allow workers to use your phone for local business calls?
- Will bathroom facilities in your home be available to workers?
- What is the remodeler's policy on smoking on the job site?
- What is the remodeler's policy on the use of profanity? If you are especially sensitive to this issue, you should let your remodeler know.
- Will you allow workers to play their radios at a reasonable volume?

Are there any stations or programs that you do not want played?

Timing and Schedules

The time it takes to complete a remodeling project varies quite a bit depending on the scope of the project and uncontrollable factors like the weather.

A simple bathroom remodeling may only take a few weeks, while a two-story addition may take six months or more.

To stay on schedule, you need to plan ahead:

- Be sure to build time into your schedule for obtaining the necessary permits.
- Expect to set aside time for telephone calls and regular meetings with your contact person to review progress and discuss the schedule for remaining work.
- Ask your remodeler to provide you with a weekly schedule.
- Ask your remodeler which product orders require the longest lead times. For custom-made items, it is especially important to make your selections as early in the process as possible.
- Realize that changes you make to the project after work has begun may affect the schedule and the budget. Change orders should include prices, full descriptions, and authorization in writing before any new work begins.

Preventing Remodeling Fever

The train-station atmosphere of a remodeling project can lead to remodeling fever. The main symptom of this temporary affliction is feeling a loss of control that results from disrupted routines and the impact on your personal space. The best way to prevent this fever is to prepare well, remember that "this too shall pass," and focus on the progress being made.

A few other suggestions from remodeling pros:

- Prepare for inconvenience. A remodeling project can turn your home and -- on some days -- your life upside down. A kitchen remodel will, of course, affect meal planning. But a little ingenuity and some culinary shortcuts can lessen the impact. Set up a temporary cooking quarters by moving the refrigerator, toaster oven, and microwave to another room. Arrange a dishwashing station in your laundry room. If the weather is warm, fire up the grill and dine alfresco.

- Designate a safe haven in your home where you can escape from the chaos and commotion.

- Guard against dust. During a remodeling project, dust has the unfortunate tendency to appear everywhere from lampshades to plates stacked inside your kitchen cabinets.

To keep out as much dust as possible:

- 1) Seal off doorways and stairs;
- 2) Turn off central air or heat when workers are sanding and stock up on extra filters so that you can change them often;
- 3) Have deliveries made through a designated entrance;
- 4) Use doormats and temporary floor coverings where appropriate;
- 5) Remove anything that might get damaged by the dust or at least cover it with plastic drop cloths that are taped shut.

- Maintain a sense of humor, Remember that certain things are out of your control and it's best to laugh rather than upset yourself about things like the weather or delayed delivery of materials.

- See the remodeling process as an adventure. Tell the kids that you are "camping in" and transform inconvenience into fun. Along the way, celebrate as different stages of the project are completed. The day the drywall is completed, for instance, could be marked by a nice dinner out.