

13 Essential Questions to Ask Yourself Before Tackling a Renovation

No one knows you better than yourself, so to get the remodel you truly want, consider these questions first



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The better you communicate with your interior designer, architect or contractor before you start your renovation, the easier the process will be. If you take the time to consider what you truly want from your remodel before the demolition begins, it will end up saving you time and money. Ask yourself the following 13 questions for a smoother renovation process and results more likely to meet your vision.

1. What rooms do you want renovated? This one seems like a no-brainer, but bear in mind that renovating one space will affect the adjoining spaces as well. If you renovate only your open kitchen, for example, will the dining or living area connected to it feel dated afterwards? Even if your budget or schedule demands a one-room-at-a-time approach, it's important to consider how one renovated space will affect the next, and to plan accordingly.

2. How much can you realistically afford to spend? Does your budget include tax and consultant fees? Does it include accommodations for you if you need to move out for a few months? Does this number include appliances, lighting fixtures and furniture? There are costs outside of your construction budget that you won't see from your contractor. You need to let your designer know if your budget is inclusive of all these expenses

3. How will you use the room you're renovating? For example, will your living room be a place for entertaining guests or entertaining yourself with a large flat-screen television? Do you consider the kitchen a shared living space for the entire family or a space where the chef has the run of the land? These decisions will dramatically change the design, look and function of the room.

4. What's your design style? Do you like modern, transitional, contemporary or traditional? Peruse Houzz photos to get an idea of the type of design style that speaks most to you. All of the photos on Houzz are categorized by style. Discover your favorite.

5. What are your accessibility considerations? Does anyone in the family have a disability, or do you envisage staying in the house for a long enough time that mobility issues might one day come into play? If so, it might be better to factor this into your renovation now than have to deal with it later.

6. How important is sustainable design to you? Sustainable development and increased energy efficiency are great for the environment, and in the long run can be great for your wallet too. It's important to understand any possible trade-offs and costs of sustainable design before you begin the renovation process.

7. What are your color preferences? Let your designer know about your color preferences right off the bat. What colors do you like best? Do you prefer bold and bright tones, or are you more comfortable with warm and muted tones? Do you like to see lots of color on every surface, or do you prefer your furniture and art to speak louder than your walls? Color has been shown to affect people's moods, so know how it affects you.

8. What's your flooring preference? Like a good pair of shoes, what's underneath your feet is vital to the look and feel of your home. There are so many options these days; how you use your space will dictate which is the best one. Do you prefer hardwood, engineered wood, stone, porcelain tile, laminate or carpet? Let your designer know your floor preferences, because it will be easier to select other finishes once the flooring is determined.

9. What are your storage requirements? Decisions about storage will likely stem from other questions you have to ask yourself. Such as, how much stuff do you already have? How much stuff are you planning to buy? And how much stuff are you willing to get rid off? Storage requirements are important to consider at the start of any renovation, since it can be difficult (requiring a lot of reconfiguration) and expensive to add storage solutions at the end of a project.

10. What type of materials do you love? Whether you prefer sleek and shiny surfaces, like lacquer and glass, or subtle matte finishes will affect just about all the material and finish selections throughout your home.

Countertops, floors, doors, walls, you name it — all of these items come in a variety of materials, so discover which ones fit your personality and style best.

11. What type of stone is right for you? Do you like engineered quartz, which is an engineered material? Or do you prefer granite, which is a durable stone that can be graphic and beautiful? Have you considered butcher block, which adds warmth and interest? Or perhaps marble, which is classic and always in style but requires a lot of maintenance. The type of stone or composite stone you select can set the tone for your entire kitchen or bathroom remodel, so make sure to familiarize yourself with all the options.

12. What's your cabinet door style? Do you like the look of clean slab doors, glass doors, Shaker-style doors or French-style doors, just to name a few? Your door type preference will help direct the design of all of your millwork in your kitchen and your bathrooms, and of built-ins in any other places that you may be adding.

13. What are your appliance preferences? Gas or electric, commercial or standard, high-tech or manual, single oven or double? Appliances can be some of the most expensive purchases in a renovation, so you want to ensure you make the right selection that meets your needs and desires.