

How to Live with Your Remodeling Project

Having your home remodeled is uniquely different from having a new home built. With remodeling, your home becomes the work site. You live side-by-side with the project from start to finish. You have to adjust your daily routines to make way for the construction that will transform your dreams into reality. This section provides tips from professional remodelers throughout the country to make living with your project as pleasant as possible.

Successful remodeling projects depend upon mutual trust and consistent communication between you and your remodeler. You need to count on your remodeler's technical expertise and ability to complete the job as promised. In addition, your remodeler will count on you to carefully prepare for and understand the remodeling process.

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. The suggestions listed below can help you and your remodeler ensure that the necessary communication occurs:

Determine who the remodeler and the homeowner should contact for daily decisions or an after-hours emergency. Exchange phone numbers in advance, especially if you are traveling or if your contact is working at multiple sites.

Timing and Schedules

The time necessary to complete remodeling projects varies based on the scope of the work and factors as uncontrollable as the weather. A bathroom remodeling project may take just a few weeks, while a two-story addition may take 6 months or more.

To help keep your project on schedule, plan ahead.

If your job requires a permit, work can begin only when that permit gives the remodeler legal permission to proceed. Depending on where you live, obtaining permits can be time-consuming, so remember to build that time into your schedule.

The Preconstruction Meeting

One way to ensure the success of your project is to plan for and actively participate in a preconstruction meeting. It is an excellent opportunity for your remodeler to clarify procedures, assign responsibility, and show how the job will progress. This discussion gives both you and your remodeler the information needed to prepare for issues that may arise later. Think of the meeting as a forum for all participants to define their expectations and agree on the anticipated outcomes. Be prepared to take notes. The preconstruction meeting probably will cover some of the topics described below.

Household Concerns

Job site Signage

Will you allow your remodeler to place a company sign on your property?

Job site Access Have you and your remodeler agreed upon a pathway for workers, construction equipment, and vehicles in order to avoid damaging outside structures, plants, and flower beds?

Work and Storage Areas What areas in your home are off limits to workers? Will the remodeler need access to areas such as the basement, attic, or garage? Do you have a place to store building materials for your project?

Furniture and Other Personal Belongings Who is responsible for removing your belongings and later returning them to the newly remodeled space? Your remodeler can tell you what to pack and store ahead of time. When packing, remember that workers may need access to the electrical panel, the water shut-off valve, and areas not being remodeled. Will you need to rent storage space?

Security Does the house have an alarm system? Will workers need a key or will someone always be available to open the door? If you will not be home at the end of the workday, post a notice telling the workers to close and lock windows and doors.

Safety What precautions will you and your remodeler take during the construction process? Will certain conditions or materials, such as lead-based paint or asbestos, require specific safety measures? (You should prevent children and pets from entering a remodeling work site, which inevitably becomes a congested and dangerous place.)

Salvaging Materials Does the space to be remodeled contain any special items (such as lighting fixtures or cabinets) that you would like to save from demolition? If so, where do you want to store them? Unless otherwise designated in the contract, a common policy is for the company to dispose of salvaged items as it sees fit.

Debris Where will your remodeler locate the dumpster on the property? Can you use it for trash unrelated to your project?

Utility Interruptions Does your remodeler anticipate any interruptions of utilities during the project? If so, when and for how long? At certain stages of construction, your project may affect basic household necessities (such as hot water, a flushable toilet, and electricity). Will you need to vacate the house at any time?

Clean-Up Will sweeping be sufficient for daily cleaning or will you need a more thorough cleaning in order to use the space? How thorough do you want the final clean-up to be? Who will arrange and pay for such a cleaning?

Worker Guidelines

The following worker guidelines will help you define your expectations and establish mutual cooperation between you and the remodeling crew:

Start and Stop Times

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 a concern about your project.

Parking Where can workers park near your job site?

Phone Will you allow workers to use your phone for local business calls?

Bathroom Will any bathroom facilities in your home be available for the crew?

Smoking Many remodeling companies prohibit employees from smoking on the job site. If smoking is allowed outside, your remodeler should provide a container for ashes and cigarette butts.

Language Most remodelers have policies that forbid profanity on the job site. If you are especially sensitive to this issue, say so at the preconstruction meeting.

Radios Will you allow workers to play their radios at a reasonable volume? When? (Some crews start their workdays early).

Prevent Remodeling Fever

Remember that your home will soon become a work site.

The pace of the work varies throughout the project.

Prepare for Inconvenience

A remodeling project can turn your home and (on some days) your life upside down.

Designate a Safe Haven

Set aside a room in your house where you can escape from the chaos and commotion.

Guard Against Dust

During a remodeling project, dust has the unfortunate tendency to appear everywhere - on lamp shades, on clothes, and even between plates stacked inside your kitchen cabinets. Reduce the impact of dust and dirt in the following ways:

>Seal off doorways and stairs

>Turn off central heat or air when workers are sanding. Stock extra filters so you can change them often.

>Have deliveries made through a designated entrance. Use doormats and temporary floor coverings where appropriate

>Remove anything that might get damaged by the dust or at the least cover it with plastic drop cloths and tape the plastic shut.

Maintain A Sense of Humor

You may need it when the weather refuses to cooperate or a vendor postpones the delivery date for materials.

Enjoy the Remodeling Process

Tell children you are "camping-in" and turn inconvenience into fun. Along the way, celebrate at completion of phases of the project; for example, splurge on your favorite take-out food when the space is plastered or dry walled.

Project Orientation

Once your project is substantially completed, you will want to thoroughly explore the new space. You and your remodeler will tour the remodeled area and discuss any last-minute details to address. Ask your remodeler for all product information, including owner's manuals and warranties. Your remodeler will explain maintenance requirements and demonstrate how any new equipment works. After the workers are gone, take a deep breath, congratulate yourself, and enjoy the added value, comfort and convenience of your newly remodeled space. With patience, consistent communication, and careful preparation, the process will go smoothly and you can enjoy the results for years.