



Removing the Uncertainties of a Kitchen Remodel



Planning a kitchen renovation project in your home is a big undertaking. Much like planning a wedding, you may have been thinking about remodeling your kitchen for quite a while. The renovation will require research, lists, and organization. Be sure to read our lesson on **Creating a Renovation Project Journal** also located in your Library under Quick Learning. It will outline the best way to stay organized during your project.

In this lesson, we will cover:

- Where to get started
- Getting a kitchen design from a professional
- Setting a budget
- The typical order in which construction is done

- The basic process of picking finishing materials

Inspiration



Every kitchen remodel starts with inspiration. You can get your inspiration from seeing new kitchens at family and friends' homes, magazines, and online websites and images. Having inspirational photos to show to your kitchen designer and contractor can make communication on your desired look so much easier.

Be sure to save or print inspirational photographs of the following items that appeal to you and keep them in your Renovation Project Journal or on your phone or tablet:

- **Cabinetry**
- **Countertops**
- **Tile or Stonework**
- **Flooring**
- **Faucets**
- **Sinks**
- **Cabinet Hardware**

- **Light fixtures**
- **Appliances**
- **Trim**
- **Paint Colors**

Before any work is done, you need to have a plan in place. This plan will determine the total cost of your project. Some general contractors will have a Planning & Design team to help you create your space plan and provide you with the plan's architectural drawings. If not, an Interior Designer can help you come up with your plan. Although detailed design plans may, on average, cost you between \$1,500 - \$3,000, in the end, it's well worth it to hire a professional to get the best functionality and space plan out of your new kitchen. With a set plan in hand, you will avoid miscommunication issues with your contractor regarding the final result. Good communication will help you avoid making multiple changes which will equal extra time and money. If you want to do a bit of research first on your own, you can read our lesson **Basic Space Planning for the Homeowner** located in your Library under Quick Learning. In that lesson, you will learn the Basic Kitchen Standards for cabinetry, sinks, and appliances. It will give you a good idea about what will fit in your current space.



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When picking a general contractor for your project, it's okay to meet with more than one. You want to make sure they get your vision and are on board to bring your dream to a reality. You can show each candidate your inspiration photographs to gauge whether you feel you are on the same page. If you already have drawings done by a designer, that will make the process even easier. Communication with your contractor is a must, and the experience will be less stressful if you have like personalities and share the same goals. Be open about your budget expectations. Recommendations from friends and family who have had good experiences with their contractors on similar projects are a great place to start, but be sure each candidate is a licensed and insured contractor.

Budget



Once you agree to a design plan, the scope of the job, or bid, should be supplied to you by your contractor. The scope should include Materials PLUS Labor and any contractor fees. Contractors will generally charge between 10% - 20% of the total project cost for managing the entire project from beginning to end. They will hire all the sub-contractors, get all required building permits, and ensure all necessary inspections are done. They will order materials and manage the scheduling of all the tradesmen with the goal of keeping your project on time. They will try to come in as close to your desired budget as possible but keep in mind material, and labor costs can fluctuate greatly depending on supply and demand.

Generally, you should spend 5 to 15 percent of your home's value on a kitchen renovation. Spending too little may de-value your home, but you may not recoup your money if you spend too much, should you need to sell within the next 5 years. If this is your forever home, you may decide it's ok to spend more and enjoy the exact kitchen you've always wanted. When coming up with your budget, be sure to set aside 10%-15% of the total project cost to possible contingency costs, especially if you own an older home. Once the walls are open, your contractor may find outdated electrical, leaks and bad plumbing, or structural issues. Setting aside that contingency will keep you from stressing when these unexpected items arise. The rest of the budget can be broken down this way:

Cabinetry – approximately 30% - 35% of the budget.

Cabinetry – approximately 30% - 35% of the budget. It will depend on how many cabinets you are installing and how custom they are. You can save some money if you break up the upper cabinets with sections of open shelving.

Labor & Installation - approximately 15%-20% of the budget. Because of the large amount of physical labor that goes into installing a kitchen, you should expect it to be the second-largest category in your budget breakdown.

Countertops – approximately 10%-15% of the budget. There are many countertop options, but currently, granite and quartz are some of the most popular.

Electrical/Plumbing/HVAC – approximately 10% - 15% of the budget. These percentages will vary depending on how significantly you are changing the layout of your current kitchen.

Appliances – approximately 10% of the budget. This number could go down if you plan to keep any of your existing appliances rather than purchasing new ones.

Finishes – approximately 5%-10% of the budget. This is the “pretty” stuff, like plumbing fixtures, cabinet hardware, lighting fixtures, trim, tile, paint, and flooring. The percentage will vary depending on how significantly you are changing the kitchen layout. You may keep the existing flooring if you are remaining in the same footprint as the original kitchen. It will also vary depending on the finish choices you make. Ceramic tile would be a less expensive option than stone tile, for instance.

You have your plans and your budget in hand, but there are two things to consider that could change your budget: **Allowances** and **Change Orders**.

Appliances – approximately 10% of the budget.

When putting together the bid for your project, a contractor may give you **Allowances** for the finishing materials. For instance, they may give you a \$600 allowance for two over-island light fixtures. You may find two pendant lights that you love, but together they will cost \$800. This difference in price means you will be adding \$200 to the project's total cost if you go with that choice. By that same premise, you could save money by only spending \$400 on two island fixtures and come in \$200 below budget.

The other item that can change your budget is **Change Orders**. More times than not, as the project progresses, you may decide that while the tradesmen are there, you might as well add something to the scope of the project. Always ask your contractor how they handle change orders before you start the job. Tell them you want a copy of the change order with the breakdown of the new additional costs before that work is started. Putting all changes to the original scope in writing is in the best interest of both you and your contractor. You will know your true costs, and it will ensure that the job is done to your specifications with no errors. Misunderstandings over change orders can cause a bad relationship between client and contractor, making the renovation experience a bad one. As a side note, keeping copies of any change orders in your project journal with your original budget will alleviate any surprises when invoices arrive.

Task Category Order



The complexity of your project will determine how many Task Categories will take place during the renovation. Are you building an addition to the house for your new kitchen? Are you moving or removing walls or relocating plumbing and electrical? Or are you staying in the same footprint as the original kitchen? We will approach the project as a major project with the movement of walls, plumbing, and electrical for this lesson. Keep in mind, you hired your Contractor to manage and schedule all these tasks. That is what their contractor fees are for. They will know the exact order in which to complete the work and keep you on schedule. This list outlines what to expect during the process of construction. The following tasks will likely be performed on your project:

1. **Demolition** – the removal of trim, cabinetry, fixtures, and drywall with the framing studs visible.
2. **Framing** – if walls are being removed and added, special tradesmen will frame out the new space using new lumber. They may also replace any damaged existing framing members. This will include any beams required if load-bearing walls are removed.
3. **HVAC** – air ducts and registers may need to be moved.
4. **Plumbing** – the plumber will move the rough-in plumbing to the new location for any items requiring water lines and/or drain lines, including sinks, dishwashers, refrigerators, and pot-

fillers. They will connect all drainage and supply lines to the valve sets. Gas lines for ranges are also added or moved at this time. When the rough-in is complete, the plumber will call in the inspection.

5. **Electrical** – the electrician will install panels, circuits, wires, junction boxes, conduits, gang boxes, outlets, and switches. The electrician will call in the rough-in inspection when complete.
6. **Insulation** – insulation will be added to the walls once the Open Wall inspection is completed.
7. **Wall Covering** – typically in a kitchen, drywall will be used as the wall covering. Drywalling will cause a large amount of dust. Make sure to change your air handler filter twice while the work is being done and once more when completed.
8. **Painting and Staining** – a prime coat should be done before cabinet installation so drywall imperfections can be detected. Other coats can take place after the cabinetry is installed.
9. **Cabinetry** – custom cabinets should be finished with paint or stain before installation. Touch-ups will be done during the Finish Work phase after any tile or stonework is done for the backsplashes. Once Cabinetry is installed, they will template your countertops.
10. **Trim Carpentry** – crown and baseboards will be installed.
11. **Tile Work** - backsplashes
12. **Flooring** – Depending on the flooring type, you may install flooring before or after the cabinetry is installed.
13. **Countertops** – once the cabinetry is installed, they will template the countertops, and they will be installed 2– 4 weeks later, depending on scheduling.
14. **Finish Electrical** – electrical outlet and switch plates, light fixtures, and electrical appliances are installed. The electrician will check everything is in working order and call in the Final Inspection.
15. **Finish Plumbing** – plumbing fixtures like sinks and faucets are installed. Appliances requiring drainage and/or supply lines and gas lines are connected and tested. If everything is working properly, the plumber will call in the final inspection.
16. **Finish Work** – cabinetry hardware, final trim, shoe molding, final paint touch-ups.
17. **Final Clean-up** – all large construction debris needs to be put in the trash trailer and hauled away. Any small trash is thrown into bags and then put in the trailer. All work areas need to be vacuumed and surfaces wiped down, including cabinets, countertops, and appliances. Unused materials will be removed from the worksite. One box of flooring, tile, and any leftover paint is left for the homeowner. All tools and equipment will be removed as well.

Kitchen Remodel Finishes



Finishes are the materials and elements that tie together the final design and complete the project. Because there are endless options when choosing your finishes, it can be overwhelming. There are a few decisions that you will probably discuss with your designer to help in creating the final design plan and narrowing down your options:

- Choosing the kitchen's main appliances – do you want a standard 30" range, or is a larger 36" – 48" range in your vision?
- What other non-standard major appliances have you chosen? Double freezer/refrigerator or full height wine cooler etc.
- Do you want a prep sink as well as your main kitchen sink?
- How many pendant lights or chandeliers are you wanting?
- Do you want a pot filler?

One of the greatest values of having a professional kitchen designer is knowing exactly what goes into a kitchen plan and asking you detailed questions about what does not work well for you in your current

kitchen. What are the top priority problems you want to solve with the new kitchen design? They can also narrow down your finish choices and guide you through the process once the budget is set.

When coming up with your bid, your contractor may include finish allowances in line with your desired budget parameters. When you receive your bid, make sure to ask if it includes finish allowances. Under the materials column, you should see line items for the following in your bid:

- Tile or stone for backsplash
- Flooring (if the flooring is being replaced)
- Cabinets
- Countertops
- Lighting
- Sinks & Plumbing Fixtures
- Cabinet Hardware

Having an allowance can help narrow down your choices by only considering finishes in the price point allotted. It can also make it is easier to track overages and savings that can be used in another part of the budget. A good example would be if the bid included an allowance of \$5,000 for your countertops, reflecting a high-end granite or quartz. You may decide you want a less expensive plain white quartz that will only cost \$4,000. You can either take those savings to decrease the total budget, or you can use that \$1,000 to offset more expensive tile or light fixtures. If your budget does not have allowances already in the total, be sure to keep track of the finishes as you order them to stay on top of your total costs.

In this lesson, you learned the many steps that go into a major kitchen remodel. Hopefully, it removed any uncertainties you may have had and will go along way to help your renovation be a smooth one. Below is a list of other Quick Learning lessons that may aid you in your kitchen renovation process.

Creating a Renovation Project Journal

Basic Space Planning for the Homeowner

Tips for Choosing your Home Renovation Finishes

How to Communicate with Your Contractor

How to Budget for a Home Remodeling Project