



DEFINITIVE REMODELING GUIDE TO YOUR DREAM KITCHEN

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INTRODUCTION

You've made the decision to remodel your kitchen, and while you know it will improve the value of your home over time, here are some other value statistics to consider.

The National Association of Realtors® Research Department's "**2017 Remodeling Impact Report**" shows the top two reasons for completing a kitchen upgrade were, first, to improve a worn-out kitchen (42 percent), and second, it was just time for a change (21 percent). When asked to define the most important result provided by the upgrade project, 34 percent reported functionality and livability.

Applying the same methodology to those opting for a complete kitchen renovation, the top reason was, again, to upgrade a worn-out kitchen (31 percent), but the second most popular reason was to modernize the kitchen (23 percent). Once more, the most important result noted was functionality and livability at 44 percent.

Another factor you might not have given much credence to is the "joy" factor; the happiness that comes with a completed remodeling project is real — and it's measurable.

According to the NAR report, of those who completed a kitchen upgrade, 81 percent said they wanted to be home more, 76 percent expressed an increased sense of enjoyment when they are at home, and 81 percent said they feel a major sense of accomplishment when they think of the project. Overall, a kitchen upgrade earned a "Joy Score" of 9.6 (on a scale of one to 10).

For those who finished a complete kitchen renovation, 91 percent reported wanting to be at home more, 91 percent have an increased sense of enjoyment when they are at home, and 89 percent feel a major sense of accomplishment when they think of the project. With such high satisfaction rates, it's not surprising that this group also gave their projects a Joy Score of 10.

So get a new kitchen — and a little joy — in your life. As you manage the stages of planning and remodeling, you print the Toolkit Worksheets to help you manage each step of the process and stay on track.



CREATE A PLAN THAT IS UNIQUE TO YOU AND YOUR DREAM KITCHEN

No great project has ever launched without a plan; your dream kitchen is no exception. Even if you plan to hire a contractor to manage everything from design to construction, it will not be your dream without your input. To ensure that you provide insightful information, your plan should include some or all of the following:

Step back

Before you do anything else, step back and look at your kitchen with an objective eye and using the Toolkit Step Back Worksheet write down attributes and aspects to change or keep the same.

Lifestyle Review

Next, use the Toolkit Lifestyle Review Worksheet to help you understand how everyone in the family uses the space and what can be done to improve their experience there.

Your wants and needs

Next, ask yourself two core questions:

1. What changes do I want?
2. What changes do I need?

Even if you are changing quite literally everything about your kitchen, it's good to differentiate your wants and needs. Create a list using the Toolkit Priorities and Possibilities Worksheets so you can generate a hierarchy that helps you build that itemized list your contractor will need to develop the design and construction plans for your project.



Your priorities

Using your wants and needs list, put your priorities on paper (digital or real) so you know which changes are mandatory and which changes you want but might not be necessary.

Your wish list

Think of all the things you have seen in others' kitchens that made you think, "I wish I had that in my kitchen." Maybe a unique color granite countertop or an imported tile floor. These are the things you put on your Toolkit Wish List Worksheet to investigate for inclusion in your remodel. As you make this list, do so without regard to cost or other limitations. These are your wishes, so the sky's the limit.

Your plan will be as unique as you are, and if you have a plan, you increase your chances of a smooth remodel considerably. To learn more about planning your dream kitchen, read our blog "Your Dream Kitchen: If You Can Dream It, We Can Build It."

Your ideas

You may already have some great ideas about the look, style and layout of your new kitchen, so if that is as far as you want to go before you turn it over to your trusted contactor, that's great. If you want to be more involved, ask friends and family to discuss what their recent remodel experience was like and share their knowledge about different appliances, flooring, cabinets, etc.

Also look through design and remodeling magazines and online at Pinterest NS manufacturers' sites to get a feel for what's available. Don't forget that colors change; new textures and styles are introduced and materials go in and out of favor every year. This is your entrée to the world of kitchen remodeling possibilities upon which you will build.



TIPS FOR DEVELOPING YOUR BUDGET

Whether cost is important or not, having a budget helps you prioritize your wants and needs and see where you can fit in items from your wish list. If you need assistance developing your kitchen remodel budget, read our blog “[Understanding Your Kitchen Remodel Budget](#),” and then follow these helpful tips:

Tip 1 Keep your priorities list, wants and needs list, and wish list handy when reviewing different components at different quality levels. This will help you focus on what is most important.

Tip 3 Be wary of online renovation budget calculators. So many factors play into a major remodel that these calculators cannot possibly provide real numbers in line with every project.

Tip 5 The sooner you have a budget (or at least a maximum), the sooner your contractor can begin to plan and design your kitchen.

Tip 7 Hire your contractor based on reputation, price guarantee and warranty, and your budget will thank you.

Tip 9 Consider return on investment when deciding which changes to make because some are better than others. This [realtor.com blog](#) explains it well.

Tip 2 Keep in mind the “joy” factor associated with a new kitchen as you make decisions. Having a beautiful space to make lifelong memories will help make all of your choices easier.

Tip 4 If you are remodeling your kitchen to sell your home, don’t make any major color or design commitments (like costly bright or uniquely colored counters or cabinets).

Tip 6 Make room in your budget for changes and unplanned items.

Tip 8 According to [realtor.com](#), the most costly components of a kitchen remodel are the cabinets and appliances.

Tip 10 Time is money and changes take time so make as many decisions as possible before construction begins. If you followed Tip 6, you’ll be prepared when unanticipated changes are needed during construction.



SELECTING YOUR CONTRACTOR

When you decide to remodel your kitchen, nothing is more important than finding a contractor you can trust with every step of the journey. Even the most expensive and beautiful kitchen components are only as good as the people who install them, which makes choosing the right contractor essential. The following information will help ensure that your choice is well-informed.

- 1 Go the extra mile to make sure your short list of contractors consists of all real companies. Some of the things to look for are brick-and-mortar offices, street addresses rather than P.O. box numbers, listings on the BBB website (with multiple positive reviews, or at least no negative ones), and that they are properly licensed and can provide proof of insurance.
- 2 Remodeling a kitchen is a big job and can only be done well by experienced contractors who have developed [a process to follow](#). Ask each potential contractor for a written copy of their process. Look for a high level of detail, which is indication of their expertise, and their thorough understanding of your project.
- 3 One of the best ways to spot professionals is by their [warranty](#). Contractors who don't offer a warranty should be crossed off the list. In general, the longer the warranty the better – 24 months is nice, but 36 months is ideal.
- 4 You've already followed up on references to get your short list, but don't forget to look for [awards and other professional recognition](#). Every industry likes to showcase the best in their field so a contractor that has won awards, earned certifications, or has been otherwise recognized for their exemplary work should get some extra consideration.

It's a big decision, so take the time to do it well. For more about choosing the best contractor for your project, read our blog, "[Choosing the Right Remodeling Contractor: What to Look For](#)."



A LOOK AT A KITCHEN REMODEL TIMELINE

From the first moment you decide to remodel your kitchen to the day you make your first meal in it, there are several steps that should be included in your project timeline. Without them, you risk problems, so discuss the plan with your contractor and make sure you are both on the same page from day one. A basic timeline should include the following:

- Meet with your contractor and discuss your project. Provide as much detail as possible to help you both assess if your project is a perfect fit.
- The next step is an in-home consultation where the contractor and designer can ask questions and perform basic measurements. At this time, you should also expect to receive proposed ideas for different designs, an overview of the contractor's process and a guaranteed price range for the project.
- The contractor should then return to take detailed measurements and photos for the conceptual design. At this time, you will also begin the selection process to decide on cabinets, flooring, countertops, hardware, etc.
- The next milestone is the design. Based on the information provided during the in-home consultation, a conceptual design will be created for your review. You will also make any remaining decisions about materials at this time.
- After your comments and changes are incorporated into the conceptual design, you will be asked to review again to ensure it covers everything you want. Once complete, you will sign an agreement and receive a guaranteed total project cost.
- Next comes the Construction Plan – the detailed remodeling process, from start to finish, provided by your contractor. When complete, you will be asked to review and, if all is in order, sign the Construction Plan Agreement.
- Now comes the building process, which is detailed in your Construction Plan. Your contractor will begin ordering all of your material selections and a start date will be set. Let the construction begin! Take a look at our blog, "[Kitchen Remodel Timeline: What Can I Expect?](#)" for more about milestones throughout the process, including construction.



KITCHEN REMODEL SURVIVAL TACTICS

A kitchen remodeling project will fill you with excitement and anticipation for what your old kitchen is about to become. But while the ugly duckling is turning into the swan, there are some realities you will need to deal with. The biggest reality is the complete loss of your kitchen until the project is complete. This won't seem so difficult until it actually happens, so plan ahead for surviving your kitchen remodel with these tactics.

Tactic 1 Before construction begins, you have to pack your kitchen, move everything out of the room and store it all. Unless you and your family plan to be away for a month or more, be sure to leave unpacked everything you think will be useful in a temporary kitchen and arrange it somewhere in your house. Appliances, like your microwave, coffee maker and slow cooker, are helpful additions to your temporary kitchen, as are paper plates and plastic utensils. Since you will no longer have your kitchen sink and dishwasher, keep in mind the need to minimize dish washing as well.

Tactic 2 To help make the kitchen transition easier for the whole family, try to establish a new area for meals and enjoying all of your family routines. Having it all set up and ready to go will allow the family to continue business as usual even as your kitchen is dismantled and rebuilt.

Tactic 3 Even the most ambitious planner will eventually concede; sometimes it's just easier to eat at a restaurant than cook in the temporary kitchen. Knowing ahead of time that this is a probability, you can plan for meals out on special days, like birthdays and anniversaries, adding to the celebratory mode and taking the pressure off the temporary kitchen to deliver an awesome meal with limited means.

Tactic 4 Two things you and your family will have to prepare for are noise and dust. It's the nature of demolition and construction work; your project cannot be completed without some of both. But there are two things you can (and should) do to make life easier. First and foremost, hire a contractor that has a system in place to keep the dust under control. An experienced contractor will be prepared to manage this process as part of the renovation. Second, do your best to keep doors closed and rugs nearby to catch any fugitive dust.

Tactic 5 Remind yourself and your family that no matter the inconvenience, the project is worth it and once complete, will provide a place to create years of happy memories and wonderful meals.

Get even more detail about what you can do to make life during a kitchen renovation easier for everyone. Check out our blog, [“How to Survive a Kitchen Remodel.”](#)



PROJECT WRAP UP - YOUR FINAL FRONTIER

You've made it through 99 percent of your kitchen remodel and you cannot wait to get moved in and begin enjoying every inch of it. But there are a few more important steps to complete.

One of the most important is the punch list, an itemized account of all the seemingly tiny things that remain to be done or must be corrected in order for you and your contractor to agree the work is complete. The best way to compose a punch list is to walk through the almost-finished project with your contractor and your written Construction Plan to conduct a step-by-step inspection of every aspect of the remodel.

For example, open and close every cabinet door, drawer, pull-out shelf and Lazy Susan to make sure they function smoothly and quietly. Test all faucets, checking that they turn the right direction for hot and cold, that the water pressure is adequate and the hardware is correctly installed. Inspect paint, woodwork and trim, flooring (including grout, if any), countertops, and all new appliances. Look for chips, cracks, spots that need a touch up, and so on. Take notes that define exactly what needs additional work, where it is, and the nature of the problem.

Another key step you want to take is to make sure you have all the manufacturers' paperwork for each new appliance, piece of hardware or other component. Check to be sure each contains the manufacturer's warranty information so you have it in case anything goes wrong in the future.

Last, but by far not least, is the cleanup. It should be included in your construction plan and completely thorough. Depending upon the extent of the remodeling project, good contractors may include a full house cleaning to be sure all residual dirt and dust is removed from every room.

You can now see the light shining at the end of the tunnel, and once everything on your punch list is completed to your satisfaction, you will get the green light to move back into your kitchen.

Bon appétit!



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TAKE A STEP BACK WORKSHEET

Every aspect of your remodel should be considered objectively before you create a new design. By categorizing each aspect, you can begin to narrow down your true needs and desires, which will eventually be translated into your dream remodel. Simply go room to room and carefully critique how each functions, what components you like or don't like and what changes you want to see in the redesign. Keep in mind you may like (or even love) something, but still choose to change it.

ROOM	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LIKE	DON'T LIKE	WANT TO CHANGE

Kitchens • Baths • Decks • Basements • Additions

LIFESTYLE REVIEW WORKSHEET

Every room involved in a remodel has a particular purpose and is likely used by every family member. To ensure your remodel considers how every family uses (or would like to use) each room, start keeping track of what each family member does in each room, even if it's only occasionally.

ROOM	PERSON	USE	FREQUENCY	SPACE
<i>Kitchen</i>	<i>son John</i>	<i>homework</i>	<i>daily</i>	<i>too small</i>
<i>Kitchen</i>	<i>mom Mary</i>	<i>paying bills</i>	<i>weekly</i>	<i>no filing space</i>

Kitchens • Baths • Decks • Basements • Additions

DREAM REMODEL PRIORITIES

Dream Remodel **Priorities** — The things you absolutely must have in your new room(s). It is likely that all of the items on this list will be included, but ranking how much you want each will aid in the design phase.

ROOM	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LEVEL OF DESIRE 1 LOW - 5 HIGH				
		1	2	3	4	5

Kitchens • Baths • Decks • Basements • Additions

DREAM REMODEL POSSIBILITIES

Dream Remodel **Possibilities** — The things you would like to have but that are not mandatory. Rank them to provide a basis for choosing your highest preferences when you meet with your contractor.

ROOM	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LEVEL OF DESIRE 1 LOW - 5 HIGH				
		1	2	3	4	5

Kitchens • Baths • Decks • Basements • Additions

DREAM REMODEL WISH LIST

As you're perusing magazines and online remodeling sites, you're inevitably going to see a few things that you would really love to include in your dream remodel, but never considered for different reasons. But this is your dream remodel so it's worth making note of these items on your "Dream Remodel Wish List" so you and your contractor can explore the possibilities together. Ranking them also helps you define their importance from your perspective.

ROOM	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LEVEL OF DESIRE 1 LOW - 5 HIGH				
		1	2	3	4	5

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