

# Tips for a **smooth remodeling** experience

With the recent downturn in the national economy, many homeowners are looking at ways to save money. Some are opting to remodel instead of purchasing new homes. Others are remodeling their homes to make them more attractive in today's housing market. Still others are remodeling their homes to make them more energy efficient.

Here is a list of 10 tips that can assist homeowners in embarking on an exciting home remodeling project:

1. Establish good two-way communication with the remodeler. It's essential to have good communication for a smooth remodeling project. Does the remodeler listen? Does he or she answer questions clearly and candidly? Can you reach him when you need to? Does he



Kitchen remodels are among the most popular renovations -- and most expensive -- and can greatly increase the value of a home. Employ a qualified contractor and remodeler to be sure you get your money's worth.

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2. Make sure you have compatibility and "fit" with the contractor. You'll spend a lot of time with your remodeler so it's important to have a good rapport and trust in him.

3. Set a clear and mutual understanding about the schedule. You and your remodeler should agree on the schedule up front to avoid conflict and problems later in the project.

4. Request a written proposal. Often times, two people remember the same conversation differently. Get the proposal in writing and work with the remodeler to ensure it reflects your wishes.

5. Determine a clear and mutual understanding on the miscellaneous details. There are a lot of little details that need to be settled before work starts. What times of day will they be working? How will he access the property? How will cleanup be handled? How will they protect your property?

6. Remember to be flexible. Remodeling is an interruption of your normal life. Remember to be flexible during the project so that you can handle the unexpected and go with the flow.

7. Create a clear and mutual understanding of how Change Orders will be handled. With remodeling there is always the chance you may want to change materials or other project details during the job. Agree with your remodeler on how these changes will be handled before the start of work. Also understand that changes could affect the schedule and the budget, so it's important you have all changes in writing.

8. Agree on a well-written contract that covers all the bases. The contract should include these elements: a timetable for the project, price and payment schedule, detailed speci-

cations for all products and materials, insurance information, permit information, procedures for handling change orders, lien releases, provisions for conflict resolution, notice of your right under the Federal Trade Commission's Cooling Off Rule (your right to cancel the contract within three days if it was signed someplace other than the remodeler's place of business), and details on the important issues (such as access to your home, care of the home, cleanup and trash removal).

9. Ask for a written Lien Waiver from the remodeler upon completion of the work. If the remodeler hires subcontractors for portions of the work it is their responsibility to see them compensated. In order to ensure this has been done and to protect yourself, ask for a written lien waiver when the work is finished. This document will verify everyone has been paid.

10. Establish a project plan, covering all phases and dependencies in the work. Plan

your big picture goals with the remodeler and talk out your needs. Hire a remodeler who will plan it out with you, listen to concerns, and answer questions.

This information provided by the Louisiana Home Builders Association. For a listing of reputable, proven home builders in your area - including certified remodelers - visit their website at [www.lhba.org](http://www.lhba.org), call 225-387-2714 or 800-272-9912 or email [info@lhba.org](mailto:info@lhba.org).

## Beware of fly-by-night contractors

Louisiana residents are well aware of the impact of hurricanes and flooding; they should also be aware of the dangers of unscrupulous contractors. Some signs to remember that should make throw up a red flag:

- You're told that on this job, a contract "won't be necessary."
- You're asked to pay for the entire job "up front" - or pay cash to a salesperson instead of a check or money order to a company.
- You are confronted with scare tactics, intimidation or threats.
- You're told you've been "chosen" as a demonstration project at a special, low price.
- You're told a "special" low price is good only if you sign a contract today.
- The contractor won't give you reference - or the references can't be located.
- You can't verify the contractor's business address.

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