

# Is It Time to Remodel?

Most homeowners do some type of remodeling. Remodeling projects also vary greatly from small—like painting a room, to medium—like updating the cabinets in your kitchen, to very large—like adding a whole new room or finishing the basement.

## Remodeling Steps

### Set your goals.

Why are you remodeling? Do you need more space or do you just want a newer kitchen? Are you hoping to increase the value of your home?

Most homeowners remodel because they want to enjoy living in the remodeled or expanded home and are not that concerned about the impact on its resale value. However, if you're remodeling to increase the resale value of your home, be sure to look at the homes in your neighborhood. A remodeling project that is not consistent with other homes in the neighborhood *may not* increase the resale value of your home, although it may increase your own enjoyment while living there.

Talk to your real estate agent. They can help you determine which improvements could make your house easier to sell.

### Decide who will do the work.

Some homeowners enjoy do-it-yourself projects, while others hire contractors. You could save a lot of money doing smaller projects yourself, but be sure you know exactly what the project involves before you decide.

If you decide to hire a contractor, get references—and call the references to ask what was done and whether they were happy with the work. Ask your friends and neighbors who did their work and whether or not they were happy with the job. Your real estate agent and the Better Business Bureau are also good places to start your research.

Get at least three estimates from different contractors before deciding on one. Ask questions. Remember, you're hiring them for a job, so interview your contractor and make sure the contract they prepare has everything you agreed to in writing.

### Make a budget.

If you hire a contractor, he or she will work with you to develop the budget. If you're doing the project yourself, determine the materials you need and price them at several stores. Don't forget items like glue, nails, and screws. And add 10-20% for miscalculations or challenges during the project. Remember, a very detailed budget can reduce financial surprises as your project moves forward.

### Keep a punch list.

Keep a "punch list" during the remodeling project. A punch list is a list of items that still need to be addressed before the project can be considered completed. As the project is nearing completion, schedule a walk-through with your contractor and go over the items on the list. *Do not* make the final payment or sign off on the project until *all the items* on the punch list are completed to your complete satisfaction.

### Benefits of Doing It Yourself.

- *Budget:* Can be less expensive than hiring a contractor.
- *Mid-remodeling changes:* You may have more flexibility.
  - *Personal enjoyment:* Many homeowners find it satisfying to work on their own.
  - *Legal hassles:* Many contractors are new businesses, may not be well qualified and may be under capitalized or under insured. If there are major problems with the project, you may have little or no legal recourse.



### Benefits of Hiring a Contractor.

- *Size of the project:* Big projects are sometimes too complicated for a "do-it-yourselfer" and may require a specialist.
  - *Plumbing, electrical, and carpentry work:* Can include substantial tasks and may require a contractor.
  - *Building to code:* Contractors are professionals who understand local codes. You don't want to jeopardize your safety or the safety of your home or get hit with a fine later for failing to follow local building codes.
  - *Permits and inspections:* Contractors often take care of the paperwork for you.
  - *Time constraints:* Improvements can sometimes take less time with contractors.

*If you need funds for a remodeling project you've been considering, contact your local lender today and learn about all the financing options available to you!*

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# How To Sell Your Home...Fast!

**T**hinking of selling? Regardless of whether someone is buying for the first time or he or she is a seasoned buyer, if you are the seller you will want to make sure your property will show the best it can. For the better it shows, the faster it will sell! The following tips will give you an edge over other sellers in what can be at times a very tight market.

## 1) First Impression Is Everything!

Curb appeal is vital. Your lawn should be trimmed, sidewalks and porch swept, front door clean, doorbell working.

## 2) Painting Can Make a Difference.

A minor investment in new paint may pay dividends in the form of a better price and/or a quicker sale. If your home is looking a little faded and rustic, consider giving it a coat of some new paint!

## 3) Here Comes the Sun!

Open the curtains and clean the windows so a prospect can see how bright and cheerful your house is. Dark, dreary rooms with dirty windows are not appealing to home buyers.

## 4) Don't Be a Drip!

Fix leaky faucets. Dripping water suggests faulty plumbing and possibly major repair bills to a potential buyer. Discolored, rust stained sinks can also be seen as a negative. For this reason, the sinks and toilets should be clean and sparkling.

## 5) Little Things Mean a Lot.

Loose doorknobs or cabinet pulls, sticking doors and drawers, wobbly hinges, stuck windows—are *all negative factors*. Check and repair all of these minor flaws.



## 6) Safety First.

Keep stairways and corridors absolutely clear. Clutter is unattractive and can cause accidents.

## 7) It's True! Bathrooms Sell Homes!

Try to make your bathrooms sparkle. Clean all the sinks and toilets and be sure to repair any damaged or discolored caulking.

## 8) From Stem to Stern.

Let prospects see the full value of your basement, attic, garage and closets by removing junk, cartons and any clutter. Rent a short-term storage space if necessary.

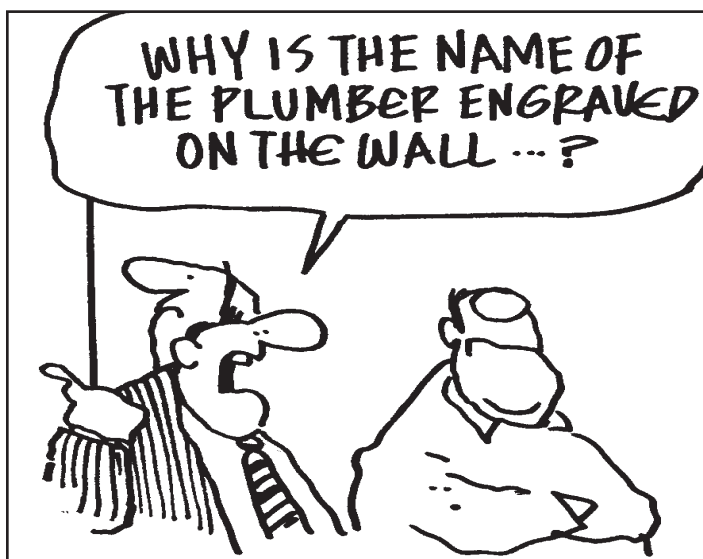
With a bit of TLC you will realize greater interest from buyers when selling your home. For a small investment of time and money, the return can often be incredible.

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## Are You Ready For a Home Equity Line of Credit?

**D**id you know that if you have a home that you've been paying on for years, you may have a lot of usable money right under your nose? What's more, a home equity loan just may be the perfect way to get your hands on that money!

Here's how it works: Let's imagine that your home mortgage is



for \$250,000, but after years of paying on that note, you only owe the mortgage company \$100,000. In this example, you would have \$150,000 in equity in your home! A home equity loan is a specific type of loan that will allow you to borrow *against* that equity.

Why would you want to do that? The number one reason people secure home equity loans is to consolidate their debt. Because a home equity loan is a secured loan, the interest rates are considerably lower than that of credit cards or personal loans. And so if a person had \$10,000 in credit card debt, they could reduce the total amount owed—as well as their monthly payments—by taking out a home equity loan and using the cash to pay off that credit card debt.

Another great reason for taking out a home equity loan is to make improvements on your home. Have you been thinking perhaps about adding a swimming pool to your backyard? ...How about a greenhouse? ...Or maybe a new bedroom or bathroom addition? A home equity loan is a great way to finance those types of home improvement projects.

Your first step should be to talk to your local mortgage professional about your options. Ask lots of questions. Your mortgage professional will give you all the information you need to make the best decision. Call today!

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