

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE REMODELING YOUR KITCHEN

Purpose: A successful kitchen remodel starts with clear goals, realistic budgeting, and good communication. This guide helps you plan for the before, during, and after phases of your project so there are fewer surprises and smoother days.

I. PLANNING & BUDGETING

(Define your scope early to avoid delays and change orders.)

- Clarify Your Priorities

- Decide what matters most:

- More storage and better organization
- New layout or open-concept design
- Brighter, layered lighting
- Upgraded appliances or better ventilation

- Rank your “must-haves” vs “nice-to-haves” so if something needs to be cut, you already know what’s flexible.

- Layout & Structural Decisions

- Decide early if you are:

- Keeping the same layout, or
- Moving walls, plumbing, gas lines, or electrical.

- Layout changes can affect:

- Permit needs
- Timeline
- Cost for trades (plumber, electrician, framing, inspections).

- Realistic Budgeting

- Set a realistic budget and include a 10–15% contingency for surprises (hidden damage, code updates, product changes).

- Ask for an itemized estimate that lists:

- Labor
- Materials
- Demolition & debris removal
- Permits (if needed)
- Any allowances (tile, fixtures, cabinets).

- Materials, Lead Times & Substitutions

- Discuss lead times for:

- Cabinets and counters
- Appliances
- Special-order fixtures or tiles.

- Have a “Plan B” option for key materials in case something is back-ordered.

- Paperwork & Approvals

- Confirm in writing:
 - Scope of work and rooms affected
 - Estimated start date, work hours, and approximate duration
 - How change orders (extra work or changes) will be priced and approved.
 - For apartments or HOAs, confirm any rules about noise hours, elevators, and deliveries.
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II. GETTING THE HOME READY

(Good prep makes the first week smoother for everyone.)

- The Week Before
 - Confirm start date and approximate arrival time.
 - Clear a space for deliveries and material storage.
 - Decide where tools can be stored at the end of each day.
- The Day Before Demolition
 - Empty all kitchen cabinets and drawers in the work area.
 - Remove artwork, wall decor, and fragile items near the kitchen.
 - Move or cover nearby furniture; protect adjacent rooms as needed.
 - Take “before” photos of the kitchen from multiple angles.
- Access & Logistics
 - Share keys, lockbox code, or buzzer instructions.
 - Show where electrical panel and main water shutoff are located.
 - Confirm where trash and debris can be placed or staged.

III. LIVING THROUGH THE REMODEL

(Kitchen renovations disrupt daily life; preparation makes it easier.)

- Set Up a Temporary “Mini-Kitchen”
 - Choose a room away from dust (dining room, basement, or spare room).
 - Helpful items:
 - Small fridge or cooler
 - Microwave or toaster oven
 - Coffee maker or electric kettle
 - Disposable plates, cups, and utensils.
- Meal & Routine Planning
 - Plan simple meals (sandwiches, salads, slow cooker, or takeout nights).
 - Keep basic essentials (coffee, snacks, baby items) in clearly labeled bins.
 - Expect some days where cooking isn’t practical.
- Dust, Noise & Safety
 - Ask how dust will be contained:
 - Plastic barriers / zip walls
 - Floor protection and covered walkways
 - Daily cleanup expectations.
 - Clarify typical work hours and which days will be the noisiest (demo, cutting, etc.).
 - Plan where children and pets will be during high-dust or high-noise work.

- Daily Check-In
 - Schedule a short check-in (morning or end-of-day) to:
 - Review what was completed
 - Hear what's planned for tomorrow
 - Bring up any concerns calmly and clearly.

IV. INSPECTIONS & FINAL WALKTHROUGH

(Verify quality before the project is marked complete.)

- Function & Safety Check
 - Test all outlets and GFCIs on counters and islands.
 - Check switches, under-cabinet lighting, and any dimmers.
 - Turn on the range hood and confirm it vents properly.
- Cabinetry & Hardware
 - Open and close every cabinet door and drawer:
 - Check for rubbing, misalignment, or loose handles.
 - Confirm organizers, pull-outs, and trash pull-outs operate smoothly.
- Surfaces & Waterproofing
 - Inspect caulking at:
 - Backsplash edges
 - Counter-to-wall transitions
 - Sink edges and around fixtures.
 - Look for gaps, cracks, or missing caulk.
- Flooring
 - Walk the floor barefoot to feel for:
 - Loose tiles
 - Hollow spots
 - High edges or trip hazards.
- Punch List
 - Create a short written list of anything that needs adjusting:
 - Paint touch-ups
 - Caulk or grout fixes
 - Sticking doors/drawers
 - Outlet or trim adjustments.
 - Review it with your contractor and agree on a schedule to address items.

V. AFTERCARE & MAINTENANCE

(Protect your investment once the crew leaves.)

- Daily Care
 - Use cutting boards and trivets; never cut directly on counters or place hot pots on unprotected surfaces.
 - Wipe spills quickly, especially oils, wine, coffee, and tomato-based sauces to protect grout,

stone, and wood.

- Cleaning Products

- Follow the manufacturer's directions for:

- Countertops (stone, quartz, laminate, butcher block)
- Cabinets (painted vs stained)
- Floors (tile vs LVP vs hardwood).

- Records & Warranties

- Keep:

- Appliance manuals and serial numbers
- Warranty cards
- Paint colors and sheens
- Photos of the finished kitchen.

- When to Call for Help

- New or spreading cracks in grout or tile
- Leaks under the sink, dishwasher, or fridge line
- Cabinet doors that warp or no longer close correctly
- Electrical issues (flickering lights, tripping breakers).

Disclaimer: Every kitchen project is unique. This guide covers typical considerations but may not address all special conditions. Work with licensed and insured professionals, review all plans and specifications before approving work, and refer to your written estimate and contract for final terms.

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