planning your perfect home renovation

save time & money
with this essential guide to
fuss-free
home improvements

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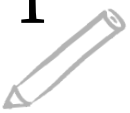


introduction to renovating

Aaah, the joy of renovation. Taking a dated or unworkable room and transforming it into something that is a pleasure to live in is a powerful experience. The word 'renovate' actually means to make new or as if new again. Renovation is to restore, repair, reinvigorate or refresh and revive. It is not, I repeat not, meant to torture, terrify or tear up relationships . . . but ask anyone who has been through it and they will tell you that it can.

There are three distinct categories of renovating, each one differing in difficulty, dust, din and disbursements. These are the three Rs of renovation:

- repair and maintain
- refurbish and enhance
- rebuild.

From simply giving your home a good spring clean to demolishing and rebuilding from scratch, all three Rs will improve a property and make it more valuable. The three 'Rs' of renovating are worth remembering, not only because they help you plan but they also help you understand what you are in for.

Every property requires a different level of renovation. What's more, all owners have different desires for their property, as well as different budgets. This

book will show you that no matter what you need to do to improve a property, it can be done sanely and affordably. It will help you to confirm the level of renovation your property will need and also offer lots of tips and advice, as well as experience from real-life renovators, to help you through your own renovation.

It's hardly surprising that renovation can easily turn to disaster. Every renovation is made up of lots of little jobs—painting, polishing, plumbing, removing, demolishing, rewiring, rebuilding—it's enough to send even the most organised person into a tailspin. Successful renovating is all about planning—about fully preparing yourself for the financial and logistical burdens of improving a property. It's about feeling in control because you are in control. It's about spending to your budget because you understand every task and job that you will be paying for. Most importantly, it's about navigating the minefield that is renovating in Australia in a way that's easy, simple and fun (although I can't promise it will be quick or cheap!).

This book helps you to plan a renovation to suit your available time, experience and money. It shows you how to establish a sensible budget and create a desire file to help you decide what you want, as well as ways to cut costs. The book will also guide you through the minefield of subcontractors, tradespeople, contracts and council approval. It includes a raft of planning tools and tables so that you can choose the planners which best suit you and your intended renovation—there's no need to fill out every planner, only those that will help you. The planners will clarify the improvements you wish to make and help you to estimate the cost of a job, as well as schedule and program the renovation work to your own needs. The case studies in Chapters 14, 15 and 16 show you how real renovators used the planners to create a renovation for their individual needs.

This book is all about improving a property easily, affordably and sensibly. It will help you diagnose the correct renovation for your needs, and guide you in deciding what to do yourself and when it is worth employing a professional. Ultimately, this book is about controlling the renovation process so that even in the hysterical renovation moments, you have some semblance of control over costs and time.

THE THREE Rs OF RENOVATION

Your first step is to identify which of the three Rs you need. They are outlined in detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7; however, here's a quick overview of what they mean.

Repair and maintain

Cleaning, repairing and maintaining a property are the cheapest and easiest ways to renovate. Repairs are NOT replacements; they are simple things like re-siliconing the edge of a kitchen sink, patching a rusty hole in an iron roof or repairing a cracked tile in a bathroom. Generally, repairs and maintenance are all about elbow grease—the dust is minimal and the biggest dangers are dishpan hands or inhaling too many bleach fumes. This is the best option for those with weak hearts but strong desires for a nice-looking home and improved property value.

Refurbish and enhance

This is the most common form of renovating—it involves stripping out old fittings and fixtures like kitchen cabinets or light fittings and replacing them with something newer. There are no structural alterations and the renovation usually does not require any council approvals or major building works. It is the most visually effective form of renovation, but it does not 'cure' the property of any structural faults.

Rebuild

Anything that involves demolition or new structures such as doorways or windows needs rebuilding. This is the type of disaster renovation that people talk ad nauseam about—it's dusty, dirty and very expensive. It should be avoided at all costs unless the property would truly benefit from it. Rebuilds are by far the most difficult renovations to tackle, but with planning they can be done relatively smoothly and cheaply. Rebuilds are unavoidable if there are major structural issues to fix—you can't just paint over subsiding foundations or put a band-aid on a leaking pipe.

RENOVATING RIGMAROLE

So, how do you decide which R of renovating your property needs? The best way is to go through the renovating rigmarole. Here's what you do:

1. Know what you want and need

You must know the work that needs to be carried out—don't start painting if you need to repair the timber architraves, don't patch the hole in the wall if it's a wall that will ultimately be knocked down and don't pay for new carpet if you'd really rather have polished floorboards. Isolate the jobs you need done. In this book, you start at the beginning by creating a floorplan of your property and a wishlist of things you'd like to do.

2. Budget: guesstimate, estimate and then make it final

Once you have isolated the work you want to do, use some cost guides and create a guesstimate figure. The actual renovation cost can end up being more or less than this, but it does give you a rough tool to start with—just make sure you have access to 20 per cent more if you need it. Once you have a guesstimate, you can obtain quotes from tradespeople or suppliers to get a more accurate cost—an estimate. Renovating is a bit like Christmas shopping—you always spend more than you plan to. Creating a final renovation budget is a bit like shuffling through your 'to buy for' list and then scrimping on Uncle Tom to buy something better for your buddy Bessie. I hope the tools in this book will help you work out a budget that you can stick to.

3. Time: the X factor

When it comes to building and renovation, time really is money. You can always do jobs more cheaply if you have lots of time. Being realistic about how much time you have to chase cheaper quotes, do projects yourself or organise subcontractors will help you plan how you can tackle the renovation. If you can cope with taking longer to fix something, then you can do it more cheaply and possibly manage the project yourself. If you have a busy job and earn more money than builders, it is wiser to employ people to do the work for you.

4. Scheduling and programming your renovation to time and budget

The biggest myths of renovation are that it is all hard, all costly and all time-consuming. However, if you know what you are tackling and do it methodically, it won't be disastrous. This book will help you to understand how long it will take to do certain jobs so that you can formulate your own renovation plan which, ultimately, estimates the costs and schedules your time. Scheduling a renovation is an artful blend of balancing your available spare time with your wallet power. The more power your wallet has—or the more spare time you have up your sleeve—the better able you are to schedule a renovation.

GETTING STARTED—THE FLOORPLAN

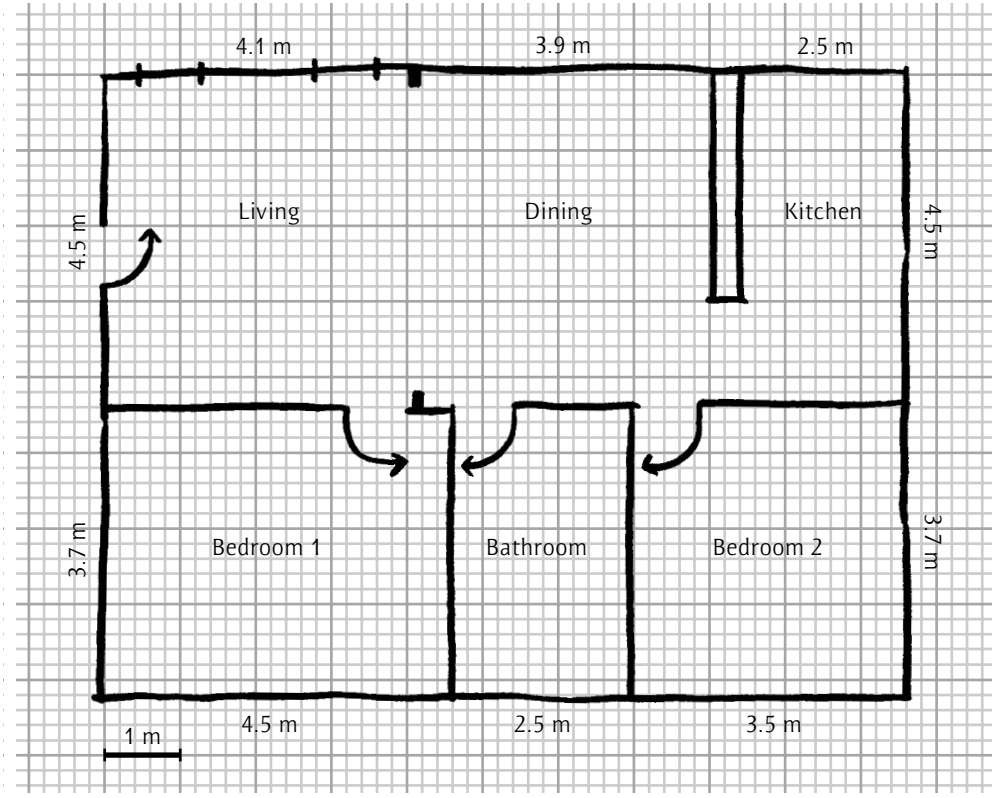
Every renovation will be different—some are extensive, some are not—but all are best started with a floorplan. A floorplan helps you to identify the tasks you need to complete, as well as helping to gather your thoughts and desires for your property and marry them with the practical realities of renovating. The floorplan is your most basic planning tool. You will need:

- an A4 pad of graph paper
- a tape measure
- a pencil
- about an hour.

To create a floorplan of your property, simply go from room to room, measuring room sizes and noting doorways, windows and other structures. Take note of the square metreage of each room (multiply the room length by the room width) and you start to get an idea of how much space you need to makeover. It helps to create a floorplan to scale, using graph paper (which is readily available at newsagents and stationery stores). Make one square or two of graph paper represent a metre of real space, and mark all doors and windows in the correct place.

Diagram 1-1

A basic floorplan



Armed with your floorplan, you'll be ready to begin your renovation journey. The tools and planners in this book will help you decide the level of renovation each room needs, the tasks which need to be completed and the steps you will take to complete them. Good luck!

The five rules of renovation planning

1 Set your desired outcome according to your time and money: Decide what you want—a totally slick pad or just a nice kitchen to work in? If you want a slick pad but only have $5000 to spend, then you'll need to prioritise how you will accomplish it all.

2 Survey the scene by creating a floorplan, plan an attack and THEN act: Use the planners and tables in this book before you embark on any dust-inducing action. It's the old tradesman's rule of measure twice, cut once. Plan hard, renovate sanely.

3 If the hardest job isn't finished first, don't waste your time or money on other things: Don't paint a room until you've replaced the rotten architraves. And don't waste five hours scrubbing an old bath if you plan on replacing it in three months' time—well, unless you have five hours to spare and really want to . . .

4 Always, always, always choose the easiest method of renovating to your desired outcome: It will save you time, it will save you money and it will save your sanity. Don't go overboard just for the sake of it.

5 Make maintenance a mantra: Don't undo all your good work by forgetting the little things that devalue a property and take hours to fix. Look after your property and your renovation work—that way you won't have to revisit the process again for a long time.

2

the buck starts here

You are obviously reading this book because you are thinking of tackling some kind of renovation—and while this chapter isn't here to put you off, it is here to remind you that you have to set a budget. Or, at least, you have to set some kind of limit on how far you will take this renovation caper.

I am not trying to remind you of the evils of money because I want to smack your hand and keep you in line, but I learnt the hard way about spending too much money on a renovation—I did it myself.

When my husband and I first bought our slum, we patted ourselves on the backs at the bargain price we snared it for. We thought we would do a fancy architectural renovation in a few years when we had more money, and in the meantime we would spend around $10 000 to polish the floorboards, replace the spray-on ceilings and paint the place. Ha! What a joke.

We ended up spending around $60 000 on our 'little renovation'. On our first day of demolishing the old ceilings, ten tonnes of black coal dust fell on my husband's head and we had to hire someone to vacuum the ceiling cavities. The careless turkey with the vacuum cleaner then managed to snap the wiring in the ceiling, leaving us without any power. That meant we had to rewire the whole house (che-ching, che-ching . . . the renovation cash register just started ringing) and because it was a brick terrace with solid plaster, the walls had to be replastered as well. Just the plastering and the rewiring cost about $20 000. The whole thing just kept getting bigger than Ben Hur—as we replaced the ceilings downstairs, we found old termite-eaten beams which had to be replaced; as we

stripped out the kitchen, the back fence fell down. And the story goes on and on . . .

The moral of my miserable tale is this: I learnt the hard way and I am writing this book so others don't have to go and spend six times their original budget on a renovation just because they are as naïve as I was.

Renovating is as rewarding as it is miserable. I loved living in my beautifully renovated terrace, but I hated how much the renovation cost. (I hated it even more when I realised that once we had two children, there was no way we would all fit into our charmingly renovated terrace and we had to sell within three years of renovating—not the most ideal timeframe to try to recoup the costs. Thank God for a property boom.)

The Can of Worms factor

Most builders and tradespeople hate working on renovations because of the Can of Worms factor—once you start working on an older property, it is like opening a can of worms. A myriad problems spill forth as soon as you knock down a wall, remove a ceiling or lift a floorboard. Leaking pipes, termite damage, rotten bearers, leaking rooves, damp and drainage problems are often only revealed once the wall/ceiling/floor has been removed.

And don't think the same doesn't happen to relatively new properties—many building inspectors in Sydney deplore the project homes built in new subdivisions because slabs aren't square or windows aren't weatherproofed properly, and it's only when they start to try to fix a problem that they discover the entire structure is compromised by a poorly laid slab or inadequate weatherproofing.

This means you have to fix the undiscovered problems, as well as the original problem. Builders will always add a Can of Worms factor to a renovation quote, as a buffer for work which has not yet been discovered.

The Can of Worms factor is another reason why you need 10–20 per cent more than your original renovation budget—there are always unexpected things that have to be fixed. There is no point laying your new $5000 floor on top of a leaking pipe because you don't have the $2000 to pay the plumber to repair it.

DON'T WRECK YOUR PROPERTY VALUE WITH RENOVATION

In all the bluff and bluster of renovation talk, little is said about renovations that actually lower the value of a property. Yes, despite what happens on television, there are many cases where people renovate and actually devalue their property. This is not as difficult to achieve as you would expect, and can occur when:

- The renovation is done in a way that suits only the owner, not a potential pool of property buyers (yes, the nautical theme might be right up your own decorating alley, but others could well detest it).
- The property is in a poor position or location (it might be up 89 steps or next door to a gun factory) and renovation cannot disguise this.
- The property is in dire need of structural renovation so property buyers do not see the value in paying for refurbishments that need to be ripped out. In fact, doing nothing to a property in need of structural renovation might net a better sale price.

The other cruel fact is that it is extremely difficult to recoup the entire cost of renovations if you try to sell a property within one or two years of that renovation. It takes at least three to five years to recoup renovation costs, and even longer if growth in the property market stalls.

Sure, some television shows will let you believe that you can spend one weekend and $20 000 to add $170 000 to your property, but the real reasons why those type of property price leaps happen are:

- A booming housing market will always give higher-than-expected property prices for owners (but most of those owners also have to then buy in that same booming market).
- Any real estate agent will tell you that cosmetic improvements ALWAYS help to attract the greatest number of property buyers; they've been saying the same thing for decades.

- The $20 000 that the television show spent on the renovations does not include the labour costs—only material costs. To do a similar renovation yourself, you may have to spend double the money and four times the time.

Anyone who works in the building trades knows the truth behind the 'weekend renovations' shown on television—you never see the number of tradespeople on site or how slickly project-managed each renovation is.

As James, the wonder renovation guru who has overseen more than a hundred renovations, says: 'It's impossible to organise five tradespeople in one day unless you're a television program that offers promotional benefits to the tradespeople and suppliers. If an everyday person tried to project-manage a renovation in a weekend, they would go crazy.'

In other words, forget the fantasy of renovating cheaply and instantly for a huge gain in your property value—it only happens on TV, not in the real world.

THE REAL COSTS OF RENOVATION

Renovating doesn't come cheaply. Naturally, the cost depends on what you try to do to a property, but basically:

- repair and maintain $
- refurbish and enhance $$
- rebuild $$$$$

There are, however, other costs attached to renovating, which many people don't bother to work out—some are financial costs and some are lifestyle costs. These include:

- **The cost of your time**—Overseeing a renovation is time-consuming, even if you choose to outsource everything and leave it in the hands of capable professionals. For example, if you earn $60 000 a year for a 40-hour a week job, the time you give to your employer is worth around $32 an hour; even

employing professionals to organise and complete your renovation will take at least 20 hours of your time.

- **The cost of stress**—If you fail to follow a plan or method when renovating, things will go wrong. Costs will blow out. You will fight with your partner, or your bank manager, or anyone who comes near you. If you are the type of person who can handle pressure, then the cost of stress may be negligible to you. If you are a person who hates stress, then the cost is high.
- **The cost of chaos**—If you renovate a kitchen, how do you plan to cook meals each night? If your bathroom is inaccessible for three weeks, where will you shower and how much will it cost to rent a Port-a-loo? If anyone in the family is asthmatic, they cannot live within coo-ee of a dusty renovation. What might these things cost you in terms of money and lifestyle?
- **The cost of temporary relocation**—If you need to move out for a refurbishment or a rebuild, where will you stay? Will you have to rent temporary accommodation? What are the costs?

WORKING OUT WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD

Most normal people don't have unlimited funds or savings which allow them to spend all that they want on their desired renovation. It's hard enough just buying a property, let alone finding more money to fix it up.

Yes, when you read magazines and watch TV it does seem that renovators are quite happy to splash out $200 000 to put the charm back into their little shack, but most mere mortals do not have access to that kind of cash without hitting the redraw button on their mortgage account. That means you need to carefully consider your budget before you start taking down ceilings and opening your own can of renovation worms.

Nowadays, flexible mortgage arrangements mean it's relatively easy to borrow extra money against your property to finance renovations. While banks make this sound very simple, the catch is that you must have a reasonable portion of equity in your home to make this work. If you have less than 20 per cent equity in your home and think that you should borrow some more money to renovate, you need a smack on the hand! Do not even consider borrowing money to renovate

until you own a good stake in your home. The other hideous problem with borrowing to renovate is that interest rates can rise over time, and the borrowed renovation money can end up costing you a lot more than you originally thought. That means a $50 000 renovation on today's money will cost you $110 848 over 25 years at 7.5 per cent interest, but if interest rates increased to 10 per cent in three years' time, that same renovation would cost you $136 305 over 25 years. How much do you really want that renovation?

Table 2-1
What it really costs to borrow money for renovation

Amount	Interest rate	Extra monthly repayment	Total interest payable over 25 years	Total cost of renovation
$50 000	7.5 per cent	$370	$60 848	$110 848
$100 000	7.5 per cent	$739	$121 698	$221 698
$150 000	7.5 per cent	$1109	$182 547	$332 547
$200 000	7.5 per cent	$1478	$243 395	$443 395
$50 000	8 per cent	$386	$65 772	$115 772
$100 000	8 per cent	$772	$131 544	$231 544
$150 000	8 per cent	$1158	$197 318	$347 318
$200 000	8 per cent	$1543	$263 089	$463 089
$50 000	9 per cent	$420	$75 880	$125 880
$100 000	9 per cent	$839	$151 759	$251 759
$150 000	9 per cent	$1259	$227 639	$377 639
$200 000	9 per cent	$1678	$303 518	$503 518
$50 000	10 per cent	$454	$86 305	$136 305
$100 000	10 per cent	$909	$172 610	$272 610
$150 000	10 per cent	$1363	$258 915	$408 915
$200 000	10 per cent	$1817	$345 220	$545 220

HOW TO WORK OUT COSTS

Labour, materials and time are the true accountable costs of renovating. It is extremely difficult to work out an exact renovation budget in advance—that is the great skill of quantity surveyors and builders. This section of the book aims to give you some 'rough rules' for working out costs. These rough rules should not be taken literally and I most certainly will not hold myself responsible for any cost blow-outs . . . after all, this is someone who spent $60 000 on a $10 000 renovation!

Table 2-2
Renovation planner 1: Example of an initial renovation wishlist

Room	What needs doing	Guesstimated cost	Priority	Guesstimated time
Lounge room	Painting lounge room	$800	High	Two hours getting quotes from painters.
	Polishing floorboards	$500	Medium	Five days' work to remove furniture, hire sander and edger from a tool-hire company, strip back floor-boards and paint floor with oil finish. Unable to walk on finished floor for 48 hours.
TOTAL COST: $1300 TOTAL TIME: 1 week				

GUESSTIMATING

Guesstimating costs can be difficult for people who have little experience with building. There are building industry publications that outline all material and

labour costs for building and renovation; they are updated every six months. Professional developers, architects and builders use these guides to keep up to date with costs, but it is unlikely that home renovators would be able to access labour and materials at the 'trade' prices unless they are tradespeople. These publications are published by quantity surveying firms Cordells and Rawlinsons and can be bought from specialist building bookstores.

Robert Caulfield, managing director of Archicentre, says renovation costs can be scientifically worked out with 'costs guides', but the ultimate price can still vary markedly. Archicentre specialises in offering affordable architectural services for home renovators. 'We have people getting prices from builders and the quotes can vary by as much as 150 per cent,' he says.

Some common retail material costs

Plasterboard sheet $20–30
PVC pipe 3 m $60–70
Concrete $10–12 for 40 kg

Some common labour costs

Electrician $40–55 per hour
Plumber $40–55 per hour
Bricklayer $35–55 per hour

The industry publications also show regional differences in prices. Some cities have higher demand for trades and material but restricted supply; others do not. Archicentre suggests that Sydney has the highest variation in renovation costs, with some suburbs reporting renovation costs of $3500 per square metre. Most cities have similar costs for building project homes, but there can be huge variations in renovation costs depending on the type of housing, the accessibility of the site and the access to materials and labour.

You've got to love architects. On top of their great skill at designing good renovations, they have put together a guide to building and renovation costs, accessible on their website (www.archicentre.com.au). Again, this is a helpful rule-of-thumb guide.

The first thing to learn about building costs is that everything comes down to a price per square metre. This isn't done to confuse everyday people; its done so that everyone talks the same language. It clearly shows that bigger rooms cost more.

According to the Archicentre cost guide, September 2004:

- Bathrooms total $7800 to $21 000
- Kitchens total $9000 to $27 000
- Laundries total $3500 to $8250
- Bedrooms total $3300 to $7000.

On average, you're looking at $195 to $420 per square metre for a renovation, excluding high-end fittings (you need to add more for nice light fittings, solid timber floorboards, high-quality window furnishings etc.). These cost estimates include plastering, painting, plumbing, relocation or replacement of windows and renewal of fittings and fixtures, cabinetry additions and surfacing such as tiling. They exclude stormwater drainage, paving, carpets, curtains, appliances or the construction of internal partitions to modify the layout of the rooms.

STEP-BY-STEP RENOVATION BUDGETING

If there is one thing this book will emphasise, it is this: plan, plan, plan. If you double the time spent planning, you will halve your renovation time. You will also avoid all the stress, hassle and hell of renovation that seasoned property-improvers talk about. The most important place to start planning is with your money.

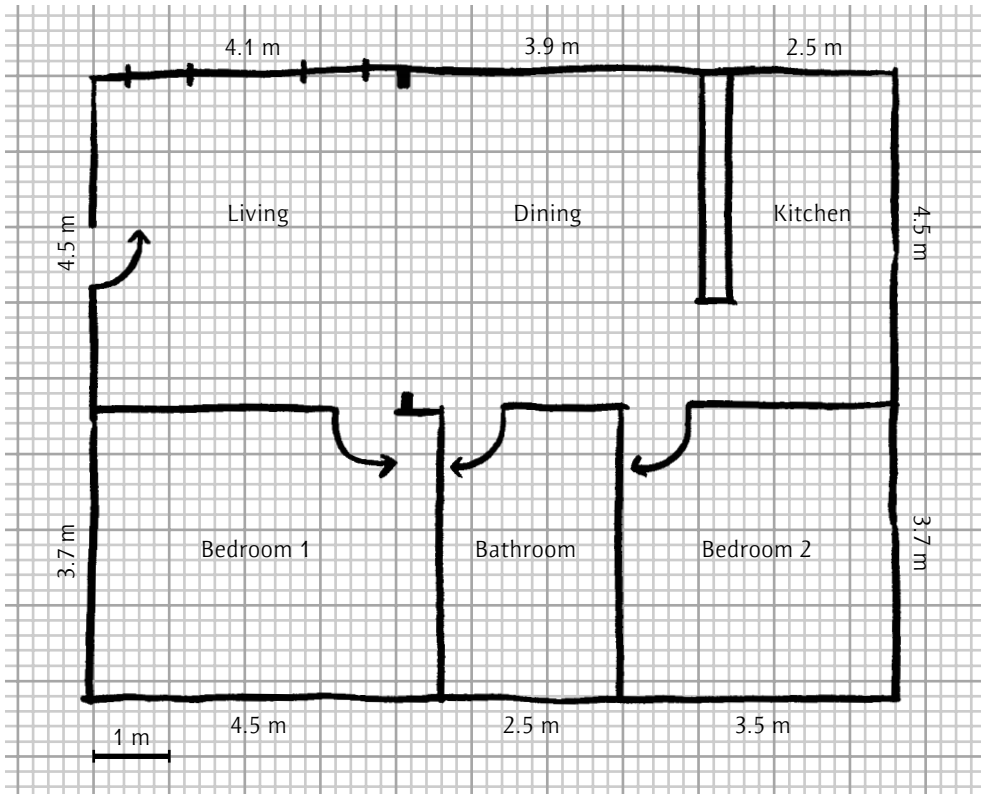
STEP 1: Create a floorplan of your property (outlined in Chapter 1). Make sure you have the exact dimensions of each room so that you can work out how many square metres you have in your property.

STEP 2: Using the Archicentre cost guides, guesstimate how much it will cost to renovate each room.

STEP 3: Try not to die of shock! Yes, you can possibly work back from those maximum figures, but you won't be able to scrimp much on the minimum figures unless you're a tradesperson or renovation professional.

Diagram 2-1

A basic floorplan with square metreage and renovation cost estimates



Living	4.1 m x 4.5 m = 18.45 sq m @ $195/sq m = $3598
Dining	4.5 m x 3.9 m = 17.55 sq m @ $195/sq m = $3422
Bedroom 1	4.5 m x 3.7 m = 16.65 sq m @ $195/sq m = $3247
Bedroom 2	3.7 m x 3.5 m = 12.95 sq m @ $195/sq m = $2525
Kitchen	4.5 m x 2.5 m = 11.25 sq m @ $420/sq m = $4725
Bathroom	3.7 m x 2.5 m = 9.25 sq m @ $420/sq m = $3885
TOTAL:	86.1 sq m
TOTAL COST:	$21 402

CUTTING RENOVATION COSTS

There are very few ways that normal, everyday people who work full-time jobs to service a mortgage can renovate cheaply. Sure, you could take annual leave to do some labouring with your builder or paint a few rooms, but is that really the way you want to spend your holidays? It is one of those lifestyle-television myths that renovations are easy to do yourself for minimal cost—the only way to save money is to undertake as little structural or refurbishment work as possible. Remember, the three costs of renovation are time, labour and materials—the lower the price, the lower the quality of materials and the more time some DIY-er has had to put into it.

If you cannot afford the minimal range of a renovation, then you simply cannot afford to refurbish or rebuild. You will, however, be able to put in some elbow grease and a few dollars at the local hardware store to spruce up your property. To work out what you really can afford, work through the next table.

Table 2-3
Adding up the costs of renovating

Items	Estimates
Purchase price/current value estimate of property	
Stamp duty, taxes, legal fees	
Purchase price needed for resale (add agent's commission)	
Current range of market prices in local area (always compare in same street): $X to $Y	
Totem-pole pricing—lower, mid or upper	
Reason for totem-pole pricing—position, location, potential etc.	
Guesstimated renovation cost	
Proposed time cost	
Proposed chaos quotient	
Will the renovation change the property's position on the totem pole?	
Estimated land value of property	
Estimated value of improvements to property	
GENERAL APPROACH TO RENOVATION: IS IT WORTH IT?	

Do's and don'ts of working out a budget

Do think about your desired outcomes.
Do set a limit on how much it is sensible to spend.
Do be clear about your objectives.
Do understand how much your time is worth to you (are ten weekends of renovating DIY worth it or would you rather be playing football or dining out?).
Do a rough budget based on your floorplan and the Archicentre cost guides.

Don't think you can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear—a crappy house or unit will stay crappy regardless of a new paint job or kitchen.
Don't spend what you can't afford.
Don't believe that every cent you spend on your property comes back to you as increased value.
Don't think doing everything yourself is easy or cheap.
Don't underestimate the enormity of the task you are taking on.

3

the real value of renovating

PROPERTY VALUES: WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

There has been an Australia-wide property boom in the three years to 2004. Louis Christopher, Australian Property Monitors research director, says every city in Australia has had property prices grow by between 14 and 17 per cent during the last three years, with Sydney prices rising a massive 45 per cent between 2000 and 2003.

Rod Cornish, Macquarie Bank's property guru, says a rising property market can lull renovators into thinking that the renovation created the price gains. 'When prices are growing rapidly, they are rising for renovated properties and unrenovated properties,' he says. 'In fact, in cities like Melbourne and Sydney, the price gap between renovated and unrenovated properties is very small, and most buyers would have been better off buying something that is renovated.'

Cornish predicts that the short-term price gains for property will fall back to a more realistic level (probably below 10 per cent per annum and possibly below 5 per cent per annum . . . but no-one knows for sure), and that will make it harder for people to recoup the costs of expensive renovations.

Real estate agents such as Fiona Ziff from Ray White Alexandria, in Sydney, say that presenting an outdated and unrenovated property in a way that makes it look clean and well-maintained can ensure that it fetches nearly as much as a

renovated property. 'People pay relatively more for an unrenovated property because they like the dream of being able to make it their own—they don't realise how expensive or stressful it all is,' Fiona says. 'I would only renovate a place if it was in the best position in a location that is in strong demand. Otherwise you are just throwing your money away.'

Louis Christopher also says that to renovate and sell for a profit is extremely difficult, and it's too easy to spend more money than anticipated once you start knocking down walls. 'First-time renovators should try doing something easy like putting in a patio or a new kitchen before they start knocking down walls and getting into serious dollars,' he says. 'You can always pay for a valuation at the end of the renovation to see if you really have made a profit and can do it successfully.'

WHAT DETERMINES PROPERTY VALUES?

Every suburb and every property within that suburb has a unique set of conditions that create the value—or potential selling price—of the property. Regardless of actual prices, properties always hold a value in relation to other properties. I call this the 'totem pole' value of a property, and whether prices are booming or busting, properties always stay true to their totem pole value. A house that is worth 10 per cent more than the house down the road will always be 10 per cent more valuable, whether the house is worth $2 million or $200 000. You will need to work out the value of your property on the local totem pole, as it can give a more accurate reflection of how much you are really investing in a renovation.

There are just two components of a property's value:

- the land value (this can often be worked out as a rough price per square metre)
- the improved land value (the value of the house, fences, outbuildings, landscaping and other 'improvements' to the land).

There are loads and loads of factors that influence the land value and improved land value of a property, and these vary from city to city. These factors essentially

relate to supply (how many properties are on the market) and demand (how many buyers there are for that property). The market factors that influence supply and demand can include:

- population growth
- employment
- availability of finance
- land-release policies (can more land in the area be readily released for sale by the government or authorities?)
- local council planning policies (can more apartments or houses be built in the area?).

Factors which reduce supply include national parks, natural coastlines and strict council controls.

The quality of the property will also influence its value; these factors can include:

- proximity to places of employment (ever since the industrial revolution, there has been demand for properties close to workplaces)
- proximity to shops and transport (people have to eat, people have to get out and about)
- style of housing—Californian bungalows, Federation houses and Victorian houses are rarer than modern project homes, and often command higher prices than newly built homes in the same area
- views—water views are especially valuable, but views of parks, golf courses, city skylines and bushland are also sought after
- position—is the property in a good street, is it overlooked by adjoining houses, is it next to a factory, etc.
- lifestyle features of a property, including the number of bedrooms and bathrooms.

It is important to note that the lifestyle features of a property are only one of six things that influence the perception of quality—that means that renovation might not always be the 'value adder' that you think.

SO HOW DO I WORK OUT THE VALUE OF RENOVATING?

I have a personal theory of renovating to add value, based on the 'totem pole' of property value. Since every property is unique, and therefore worth a different price, it is impossible to compare an unrenovated house in a street with a renovated house around the corner on a larger block of land. But my totem pole theory helps to assess the true value of a property.

First, you need to work out whether your house or unit is lower-priced, mid-priced or upper-priced for the local property market. You will need to follow your local property market, actually inspect the properties that are similar to yours and work out the price ranges in your suburb or district.

The second step is to work out why your property is lower-priced, mid-priced or upper-priced. You need to honestly assess the features of your property that determine its price range and then work out whether a renovation can truly take it into a higher range.

Jerri was interested in buying a unit which had an asking price of $299 000. This was immediately recognised as a 'bargain' since all other units in the area were priced between $300 000 and $360 000. Jerri knew the unit was cheaper because it was in poor condition—there was a mysterious lump on the kitchen floor and the bathroom was pokey and unrenovated. Tenants had been living in the unit and it had not been cleaned properly for years. Similar units that had been well maintained were selling for at least $25 000 more. This unit had a lovely outlook opposite a park but was in a bigger block than Jerri would have liked. Jerri, an owner-occupier, knew that investors would be turned off by such a big renovation job, so she made an offer of $290 000, knowing she would need to spend $20 000 to take the unit to the higher end of the price range for local units. Jerri will never change the size of the unit block, but the excellent position and outlook will remain as permanent features and therefore entice other buyers. Jerri realised that she had an opportunity to buy a unit on the lower-priced section of the totem pole that renovation could take to the mid-price range.

Unlike Jerri, most people mistakenly think they can take a lower-priced property and turn it into an upper-priced property by virtue of their wonderful renovation (which they also delude themselves into thinking they can do for virtually no cost with their own marvellous DIY skills). That is bulldust.

You need to understand that it is extremely difficult to make lots of money by renovating to turn a lower-priced property into an upper-priced property, or to take an upper-priced property and extend what the market will currently pay for it. It is much easier and more realistic to make money by turning a lower-priced property into a middle-priced one, or by turning a mid-priced property into an upper-priced one.

The totem pole behaves in certain ways, regardless of whether the market is growing, declining or flat. Here are some basic rules about the value of renovating a property:

- If it's lower-priced because of the position, a renovation will not take it to the mid or upper price range unless there are also lots of other unrenovated properties in the local market.
- If it's lower-priced because of poor structural condition, a renovation could fix this and take it to a mid-price, but you need to ask whether the renovation cost will be less than the newly increased value.
- If it's lower-priced because it is badly decorated with kitsch wallpaper and an ugly kitchen, a cosmetic refurbishment might push the selling price up a bit, but not much.
- If it's upper-priced because the property is in good condition and in the best position in a high-demand suburb, renovation could stretch the market to pay more.

I believe that the more money you spend on renovating a property, the more difficult it is to recoup the money. However, in high-demand locations like the inner city or beach suburbs, where supply is short, an expensive renovation that makes your property stand out from the crowd and creates buyer demand can give excellent returns.

To renovate for profit is a lofty goal that requires thorough knowledge of the

local real estate market, real estate cycles, building costs and project management. Usually, it is best left to developers, builders and speculators. Renovating your own home, however, is a different story.

OVERCAPITALISING

The word 'overcapitalise' is bandied about when people talk about renovations, but what does it really mean? It happens when you spend more money on a renovation than you can recoup when you go to sell. For example, installing a $30 000 kitchen to make a $500 000 property worth $520 000 would be overcapitalising by $10 000. Unfortunately, theorising about overcapitalising is exactly that—a theory. There is little use speculating about the value a renovation will add, as you never know how much a house is worth until it is on the market.

The real value of a renovation is usually related to lifestyle. For example, if every day is an exercise in frustration because your kitchen is impractical to cook in, then 'overcapitalising' by $10 000 might be a small sum to pay. It is hard to define such renovation lifestyle benefits in monetary terms, but they must be taken into account when you do your sums. Sometimes, it is worth borrowing money to create the home you really want.

Let's look at an example:

An unrenovated house in poor structural order on 200 sq m of land is worth $450 000 in an inner-city Sydney suburb, but a renovated house on land of the same size block and in the same street is worth $600 000. A cost analysis of renovating the $450 000 property shows that $210 000 needs to be spent (for a total of $660 000), which means the owners would be overcapitalising by $60 000. Shock horror—why would they do that! However, overcapitalisation can even out over the years, depending on how quickly the local property market grows. In this case, the owners of the property know that they only need the local real estate prices to grow by 10–15 per cent to recoup the renovation money. Also, the owners have assessed that after renovating their property will be worth $600 000 (having risen on the totem pole), and it will then increase in line with local prices. Once the house is renovated to be worth $600 000 and local prices have grown by 10 per cent, the owners will have a house worth $660 000 and the overcapitalisation will be negated.

How not to overcapitalise

The basic rule of thumb is that if you spend less than 10 per cent of the current value of the property to upgrade and improve it, then it is unlikely that you will overcapitalise. However, in a slow real estate market you can't expect to spend 10 per cent of the value and sell within a year to recoup the money. To avoid overcapitalising, it is wise to plan to live in the property for between five and ten years after renovating. If you spend less than 10 per cent of the current property value on renovating, then you shouldn't have too much trouble recouping your costs.

Sure, the owners could have just bought a $600 000 house in the first place and saved themselves the bother of renovating—which is also an exceptionally positive thing to do—however, this isn't always an option: the $600 000 house isn't always on the market at the same time as the $450 000 house. And, apart from the fact that overcapitalisation, if handled carefully, can have long-term rewards, there are also lifestyle benefits.

Sometimes, you just can't put a dollar value on the lifestyle benefits of overcapitalising on a renovation. For example:

- If you have children, you cannot live in an unrenovated house with peeling lead-based paints which could be a health hazard—health is a lifestyle benefit that cannot be affected by financial property value.
- If you work long hours and your home is your sanctuary, the pleasure of coming home to a kitchen customised to your needs or bedrooms decorated to your taste outweighs the immediate overcapitalisation.
- If you have a unique need for your property (like a workshop to restore cars or a kitchen which doubles as a food photography studio) then it may be necessary to overcapitalise to adapt the property to your job or hobby.
- If you want to live in a premium location where it is rare for properties to come on the market (for example in Sydney's Tamarama or Brisbane's riverfront district), an unrenovated property, if one becomes available, may be the only way to obtain a property in the location.

- If the house is an older or unique style and you want to upgrade or add more space.
- If the costs of moving (stamp duty, legals, commissions etc.) are much greater than the cost of overcapitalising to renovate your current property to your needs.
- If you wish to upgrade, say from a unit to a house, but cannot afford the price difference and would rather spend a smaller amount on customising your current home to your needs.

The depreciation factor of real estate values

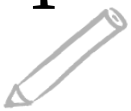
If you are a property investor, you would be familiar with the term 'depreciation'. It relates to the 'wear and tear' on a property—the falling value of something that was once new and shiny and gradually becomes worn down and worth less. It's a bit like how a car or a designer suit depreciates the minute you leave the store with it.

When it comes to houses and units, the depreciation factor of a property is built into the selling price. People will generally pay more for something that is brand new because:

- it feels nicer to live in something new
- there are few problems and less maintenance.

The fact is that land appreciates in value but the houses or units on that land will always depreciate. It is only when there is a 'capital improvement' to a property that the depreciation stalls. Renovation is an intrinsic improvement to the capital value of a property, but you may only see the true value of what you spend on a renovation returned to you on a slow scale—sometimes five or ten years later.

4



your heart's desire: working out what you want

The most difficult part of renovating is deciding what you want. There is a smorgasbord of choice out there, but not all designs or styles suit all properties. It can take time to undestand what you really want or need, and it can take even more time to work out what you can actually afford or achieve within the limitations of your property.

WHAT OTHER PEOPLE WANT

There are some distinct renovation trends that home buyers and owners like to see in a property, including:

- Open plan living spaces
- Living spaces that connect to the outdoors, often with glass doors
- Spacious bathrooms, ensuite bathrooms
- Concealed laundries
- Good natural light in rooms
- Car access and off-street parking

- Landscaped outdoor areas which act as extra rooms
- Room or space for a home office or computer (also known as a media room)
- Concealed storage for television and stereo equipment
- Proximity to lifestyle benefits such as beaches, parks, nightlife, restaurants and cafes
- Restful sanctuaries within the property, such as spa bathrooms, meditation spaces, tropical landscaping
- Older-style character or features which can't be easily re-created with modern building techniques (for example, leadlight windows, timber picture rails).

Every city and every suburb has its own unique blend of housing and apartment styles, but in all capital cities there are distinct trends in certain locations.

Inner city

- Apartments with outdoor courtyards and balconies
- Apartments with outlooks to trees, parks or golf courses, or with views of water or the city
- Secure off-street parking areas
- Walking distance to lifestyle facilities like beaches, parks, restaurants and cafes
- Excellent access to public transport
- Renovation potential—unrenovated properties often fetch a similar price to renovated properties (although the gap should widen as real estate prices stabilise)
- Excellent built-in storage and storage rooms
- Low-maintenance living which retirees or business travellers can 'lock up and leave'.

Properties 5–10 km from the city

- Good access to public transport
- Gardens that are large enough for children to play in, but small enough to be easy-care
- Proximity to schools and workplaces

- Properties with character and original features
- Potential for improvement, especially space to extend if necessary
- Views of the city, water, parklands or a golf course.

Suburban properties

- New, modern homes in exclusive subdivisions
- Easy access to good schools, both private and public
- Good road and motorway access to places of employment
- Double garages with additional off-street parking
- Formal and informal living areas
- Workshops and areas to store boats and caravans
- Easy-care gardens with outdoor entertaining areas
- Lifestyle properties on acreage
- Properties that feel like an escape from the bustle of the city (bush surrounds, beach views etc.)
- Close proximity to beaches or waterways.

Some things that seem to be on the way out for all styles of properties include:

- Large laundries
- Large expanses of water-hungry lawn with few garden design features
- Older homes with little character or few design features
- Suburban-style housing developments with little differentiation, especially those that are more than 20 years old.

RETAINING PROPERTY VALUES

A renovation will hold its value if it creates a property which will be in high demand but is of limited supply in the local area. A renovation will also hold its value if it complements the style and integrity of the original property. Even the most ungainly looking house or apartment will have some style and design features that are worth retaining, complementing or improving—these usually relate to the proportions and style of the original property.

Renovators in the 1970s would have laughed if someone said that open fireplaces would become a valued feature of a Victorian house: fireplaces were routinely boarded up to make rooms easier to furnish and seem larger, a desired lifestyle amenity at the time. Now, those houses with boarded-up fireplaces are worth less money than similar properties which still have their original features.

Without getting into an extended heritage debate, it is important to retain valuable 'original features' in a property rather than destroying them to create something new. These original features are integral to the long-term value of a property as they cannot be easily re-created and therefore are in limited supply. This in turn means demand for original features cannot be easily met, so the price of properties with original features becomes higher.

Even properties built in the 1960s and 1970s will have features worth retaining. It is important to understand the intrinsic design features of each property before embarking on a refurbishment which could destroy its future value. Generally, alterations and additions to a property should be in a similar form and use similar materials to the original structure; it is worth retaining the roofline and the look of the house from the street.

How to ruin your property value in one renovation

- Tack on an extension using different materials from the rest of the property.
- Enclose a verandah or courtyard to create an extra room.
- Install aluminium windows in a property that originally had timber windows.
- Pave outdoor paths with modern tiles or stencilled concrete.
- Alter a traditional roof line.
- Install faux heritage items like aluminium 'iron lace' or picket fences on houses that were never designed to have them.
- Tack on a second storey in different materials from the ground storey.
- Rip out original features.
- Build a huge Colourbond shed or garage on a small block.
- Destroy original garden designs.
- Pave or concrete too much of the garden area.
- Overdevelop the land area.

Original features worth retaining

- **Victorian (1840–90)**—Chimneys, fireplaces, iron lace, decorative verandahs, timber windows, timber floors, tessellated tiles, vertical joinery walls, patterned plaster ceilings, ceiling roses, original verandah tiles, parapets.
- **Federation (1890–1910)**—Unpainted brickwork, leadlighting and coloured glass, timber fretwork, tessellated tiles, bathtubs and tiles, timber floors, timber skirtings and picture rails, fireplaces, hearths, slate rooves, terracotta finials, gables.
- **Edwardian houses (1890–1918)**—Fences, weatherboard, solid timber panel doors, timber floors, fireplaces, patterned ceilings, roof gables, turned timber columns, brackets and finials, chimneys, casement windows, tessellated tiles, bathtubs and tiles.
- **Californian bungalows (1920–40)**—Leadlight windows, verandahs, large low arches, bay windows, timber shingles, terracotta finials, original floor tiles.
- **Art deco (1920–40s)**—Unpainted red or brown brick, decorative timber and leadlight windows, ceiling cornices, timber skirtings and picture rails, timber floors, cast iron bathtubs, tessellated tiles, porcelain bathroom towel rails and basins, fireplaces, mantels, curved steps or windows, glass doors.
- **Architect-designed homes (1920s onwards)**—If you're lucky enough to own one of these, try to get the original architect to design any alterations and additions. If that's not possible, maintain the intention of the original design. For example, if the rooms are large and open, add only large and open rooms.
- **Project homes (1960s onwards)**—Original windows, features that are true to the original design such as sunken lounges, kitchen serveries, separate laundries; use sympathetic materials to extend.

What about apartments?

Just like houses, apartments have design features that are worth retaining. It goes without saying that individual apartment owners cannot renovate an entire building—that is the responsibility of the collective owners (the body corporate, the executive committee, the owners' corporation). You can, however, make some improvements to your apartment.

There were two major booms in apartment construction in Australia—the 1930s Art Deco era and the 1960s. When upgrading the interior of these apartments, it is well worth retaining some of their original features. These include:

- **Art Deco**—Patterned ceilings, leadlight windows, curved windows, glass doors, timber windows, timber floors, timber skirtings and picture rails, original plaster cornices, original tiles and light fittings.
- **1960s**—These are often maligned as brick bunkers, but many have excellent solid brick and concrete construction, simple room decoration (no cornices, minimal skirtings), parquetry floors, and sometimes interesting laminex or tile finishes.

Apartment styles vary across Australia, but generally more modern apartments are not as well constructed as earlier styles. There has been another recent boom in apartment construction, but it's important to note that not all apartments are constructed alike. The very best modern apartments offer a view or outlook, rather than staring at a brick wall or another apartment block. They also have good natural light and ventilation, often with open plan living and dining spaces that connect to a small balcony or courtyard. Poorer-quality apartments have no solid walls, minimal floor space (to maximise developers' profits) and low ceiling heights. Sure, a modern apartment with stone benchtops and stainless steel appliances looks like it will never need renovating, but in another five or ten years those fittings may start to look dated.

RENOVATING TO YOUR DESIRES—CREATING A ROOM-BY-ROOM MISSION STATEMENT

Take a look around your place with a renovator's eye to start nailing what you really want to achieve. In the following section, there are checklists that will help you to complete your renovation mission statements. These are really useful, as they clearly define your aims for embarking on renovation and outline your budget. The mission statements can also work as briefs for tradespeople, builders and even architects, and they help clarify your overall goals for renovating.

The desire files

It's all very well to be methodical about this renovation business, but there's also room for a bit of dreaming. It's important to get to know what you want in a home—so start a desire file. Use an A4 or foolscap binder with clear plastic inserts. Devour home magazines and books and start filing the things that you love. Keep the ideas for each room in separate sections. After six months of desire-filing, you will have a strong idea of your likes and dislikes. And an added bonus is that if you hire an architect or designer to execute your renovation, they get an idea of your taste and desires. You should use your desired file to:

- collect ideas for furniture, fittings and fixtures
- collect ideas for colour schemes
- collect ideas for the 'look' and 'feel' of rooms
- collect photos of other houses you like, brochures from building information centres and project-home builders, and advertising material from open inspections.

The amount of time you spend in a room is also a useful tool to help plan a renovation. If you work out how much time you spend in a room, you can plan whether to spend more or less money on it according to your use. One week has 168 hours in it and if you sleep for 9 hours each night, then 63 are for sleeping. If you work full-time, you probably spend 50 hours commuting to work and working, which leaves around 55 hours each week. You might spend three nights each week at the gym or visiting friends, taking another 9 hours out of your spare 55—leaving you with just 46 hours each week for everything else!

Planning budgets according to time

First, you need to work out how many hours, on average, you are home each week. Then work out how many of those hours you spend in each room.

(Sometimes it helps to keep a weekly log of what you do in a room and for how long.) To work out the percentage of time you spend in one room, divide the number of hours spent in that room by the total number of hours you are home and then multiply by 100.

For example:

Sharon and Terry are both full-time workers, and spend at least 10 hours every weekday out of the house. On weekends, their social life is busy, and they would be out for at least 8 hours every weekend. That means they are home around 110 hours of 168 hours a week.

They spend most evenings cooking and eating in the kitchen (around 3 hours a night) before spending another 2 hours watching TV in the lounge room. Therefore, they spend 21 of a possible 110 hours in their kitchen, which is 19 per cent of their home time. It therefore could make sense to spend 19 per cent of their renovation budget on their kitchen.

Table 4-1

Time versus budget planner

Room	Average hours per week spent in room	% time at home spent in room	Renovation goal	Budget allocated	% budget (room budget divided by total budget multiplied by 100)
Lounge room					
Dining room					
Bedroom 1					
Bedroom 2					
Bedroom 3					
Bedroom 4					
Bathroom					
Kitchen					
Study					
Laundry					
Outdoor space					

Table 4-2

Room-by-room mission statements

LOUNGE ROOM

What activities are undertaken in this room?
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?
Does it have enough natural light?
Are the doorways in the right places?
Are the windows in the right places?
Are the floorcoverings what we want?
Are the window treatments what we want?
Does our furniture fit or does the room need more furniture?
Would it benefit from built-in storage or furniture?
Are there adequate power points for the equipment used in the room?
Is there adequate heating or cooling?
Would this work better as an open-plan room?

THE LOUNGE ROOM RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: We like to use the lounge room for (relaxing/entertaining/watching TV/listening to music/reading) and it is used for at least (insert number) hours each week, so the fittings and fixtures need to be (basic/mid/high) quality. We would like the lounge room to (be functional/look good/be a sanctuary). We are prepared to spend $ (insert amount) on this room, which is (insert number) % of the total budget.

DINING ROOM

What activities are undertaken in this room?
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?
Does it have enough natural light?
Are the doorways in the right places?
Are the windows in the right places?
Are the floorcoverings what we want?
Are the window treatments what we want?
Does our furniture fit or does the room need more furniture?
Would it benefit from built-in storage or furniture?
Are there adequate power points for the equipment used in the room?
Is there adequate heating or cooling?

THE DINING ROOM RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: We like to use the dining room for (eating meals/dinner parties/homework/home office) and it is used for (insert number) hours each week, so the fittings and fixtures need to be (basic/mid/high) quality. We would like the dining room to (be functional/look good). We are prepared to spend $ (insert amount) on this room, which is (insert number) % of the total budget.

BEDROOMS (Create a planner and mission statement for each bedroom)

What activities are undertaken in this room?
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?
Does it have enough natural light?
Are the doorways in the right places?
Are the windows in the right places?
Are the floorcoverings what we want?
Are the window treatments what we want?
Does our furniture fit or does the room need more furniture?
Would it benefit from built-in storage or furniture?
Are there adequate power points for the equipment used in the room?
Is there adequate heating or cooling?

THE BEDROOM RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: We like to use this bedroom to (sleep/relax/do homework/watch television/get dressed/do hair and make-up) and it is used for (insert number) hours each week, so the fittings and fixtures need to be (basic/mid/high) quality. We would like this bedroom to (be functional/look good/be a sanctuary). We are prepared to spend $ (insert amount) on this room, which is (insert number) % of the total budget.

KITCHEN

What activities are undertaken in this room?
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?
Does it have enough natural light?
Are the doorways in the right places?
Are the windows in the right places?
Are the floorcoverings what we want?
Are the window treatments what we want?
Are there enough cabinets for storage?
Is there enough bench space?
Are there adequate power points for the equipment used in the room?
Is there adequate heating or cooling?

THE KITCHEN RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: We like to use our kitchen to (cook/eat/do homework/watch television) and it is used for (insert number) hours each week, so the fittings and fixtures need to be (basic/mid/high) quality. We would like the kitchen to (be functional/look good/be a sanctuary). We are prepared to spend $ (insert amount) on this room, which is (insert number) % of the total budget.

BATHROOM (Create a planner and mission statement for each bathroom)
What activities are undertaken in this room?
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?
Does it have enough natural light?
Are the doorways in the right places?
Are the windows in the right places?
Are the floorcoverings what I want?
Are the window treatments what we want?
Is the bathtub the right size for our requirements?
Is the lighting good enough?
Is the shower recess safe and accessible?
Does the vanity have enough storage?
Do we need double basins or just one?
Do we need a separate toilet?
Are there adequate power points for the equipment used in the room?
Is there adequate heating or cooling?

THE BATHROOM RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: We like to use our bathroom to (bathe/brush teeth/do hair and make-up/relax/bathe children) and it is used for (insert number) hours each week, so the fittings and fixtures need to be (basic/mid/high) quality. We would like the bathroom to (be functional/look good/be a sanctuary). We are prepared to spend $ (insert amount) on this room, which is (insert number) % of the total budget.

OUTDOOR AREAS
BACKYARD
What activities do we use the backyard for?
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?
Do we have enough storage for our needs?
Do we have an off-street parking area?
Do we need a children's play area?
Do we have too much maintenance to do?
Are the garden beds and garden paths in the right places?
Is the entertaining area large enough for our needs?
Do we want a barbecue built in?
Is there a convenient space for garbage, recycling and compost bins?
Is there room for the herb garden/flower garden/plants we would like?
Do any large trees need pruning or removal?
Is there room to install a rainwater tank to save water?
Do we want lifestyle extras such as a swimming pool, tennis court, cubby house?

COURTYARD/BALCONY
What activities do we use the courtyard/balcony for?
Are there enough landscaping features/pot plants to make it pleasant?
Are the tiles/pavers/ground coverings suitable for our use?
Is there an area to store things?
Is there enough space for drying clothes?
Is the lighting adequate?
Is there a water supply?

FRONT YARD
Does it add to the street appeal of the house?
Is it easy enough to maintain?
Is the front fence sympathetic to the house and streetscape?
Is the mailbox in a secure and obvious position?
Is the driveway in the best place?
Are the plantings sympathetic to the house?

THE OUTDOOR AREA RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: We use our outdoor areas to (park cars/entertain/play/relax on weekends/grow herbs/dine outdoors/cook/sunbake/potter in the garden) and it is used for (insert number) hours each week. We would like our outdoor areas to (be functional/look good/be a sanctuary). We are prepared to spend $ (insert amount) on the outdoor areas, which is (insert number) % of the total budget.

DOES YOUR BUDGET MATCH YOUR DESIRES?

Most of us would happily spend more money than we have—especially on renovation. It is worth checking whether you can really afford your heart's desires by using the table on the next page to confirm if they match the planned budget. Oh, and don't forget that the top-level budget guides are only the beginning of what you can spend . . .

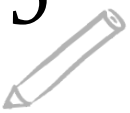
Table 4-3

Marrying budget to desire*

Room	Budget
Bathroom	$7800 to $20500 or more
Bedroom	$3300 to $6900 or more
Living area	$195 to $415 per square metre
Kitchen	$8600 to $25800 or more
Laundry	$3500 to $8100

*Using Archicentre guide to costs

5



plans, estimates and schedules

Working out what you want can be the hardest part of renovating. But wait—now there is even more to confuse you. Estimating and scheduling a renovation is the key to a painless and efficient process—but it ain't always easy. Working out the what, the where and the when of renovating involves juggling lots of small jobs.

Estimating refers to the quantities of materials you will need; scheduling refers to the timing of the work. With a little advance planning, both can run smoothly.

ESTIMATING COSTS

There are so many materials and types of labour involved in renovations—literally thousands of combinations of materials and trades which can be used on just one property. Professional estimators can work out the costs of a job for you, which is useful if you're doing a big renovation as an owner-builder. However, most of us have to make some estimates ourselves—and don't know where to begin. The list below is not exhaustive, but is a good place to start for most renovation jobs. Some materials need to be ordered six weeks or more in advance; others can be bought from the hardware store on the day you need them. Simply fill out the lines that apply to you and add new materials to the list as required.

Table 5-1
Estimating materials and labour

Labour and materials	Quantities	Quote	Order in advance
PLUMBER			
Labour and materials			
DRAINER			
Sewer/septic			
Stormwater and surface drainage			
Labour			
ROOFER			
Battens and ties			
Cladding and moulds			
Sarking			
Insulation			
Skylights			
Ventilators			
Scaffolding			
Labour			
ELECTRICIAN			
Lights and switches			
Smoke detectors			
Safety switches			
Labour and materials			
WALLS			
Plasterboard or set plaster			
Labour			
Materials			
FLOORS			
Labour and materials (tiles, carpets, floorboards)			
DOORS			
Exterior			
Interior			
Garage			
Labour			
WINDOWS			
Materials			
Labour			

PAINTING
Paint
Brushes, clean-up, paint trays etc.
Labour

HARDWARE
Nails and screws
Bolts and braces
Door handles and locks
Glue
Sealants
Sandpaper
Safety glasses, gloves, masks
Extension leads
Basic tools (e.g. drill, angle grinder, sander)

PRIME COST ITEMS
Stove/oven
Hot water service
Kitchen sink
Laundry tub
Handbasin
Bathtub
Shower tray
Toilet
Vanity unit
Laundry cabinet
Clothes line

POTENTIAL TOOLS TO HIRE
Jackhammer
Power pole
Power saws
Power drill
Scaffolding
Concreting equipment
Nail gun
Temporary toilet
Miscellaneous

FEES & OTHER COSTS
Contractors' public liability insurance
Council application fees and bonds
Owner-builder permits

THE TIME SCHEDULER

There are some basic rules of programming or scheduling renovations. All builders and project managers break down a renovation into the smaller jobs that need completing. They schedule the small jobs and, based on their extensive experience at understanding trades and material deliveries, that's how they can efficiently program an entire project.

Renovations—especially those co-ordinated by people without extensive experience in the building industry—cannot be scheduled as effectively as the building of a new home. It is a fact of life that a tiler might be held up for two days on another job, delaying your job by two days and then delaying every other job further down the schedule. There's not much you can do about this—accept that it may happen.

Working out a schedule for your renovation gives you direction. It maximises time-efficiency and minimises cost, chaos and stress. A schedule means that you don't need to keep calling out tradespeople for small jobs—you can book a tradesperson to do several things at once or you can book two or three for the same day (but ONLY if all the tradespeople agree!). A schedule means that you will be without a kitchen or bathroom or home for as minimal a period as possible.

However, you must be realistic about how much can be achieved in a time-frame and you have to develop some understanding of subcontractors and the tasks involved. For example, the plumber should be booked to install bathroom taps, vanity unit and shower taps on the same day that the kitchen needs new taps installed, but BOTH rooms need to be at the right building stage for the plumber to come in. Or, if you're painting the lounge room, paint the dining room or hallway as well, so that the time preparing rooms, cleaning brushes and getting paint in your hair is minimised.

Table 5-2
Time scheduler for renovation

Task	Week 1					Weekend 1		Week 2					Weekend 2		Week 3				
	M	T	W	T	F	Sat	Sun	M	T	W	T	F	Sat	Sun	M	T	W	T	F
Remove rubbish																			
Break up concrete and clear site																			
Plumber																			
Bricklayer																			
Carpenter																			
Tiler																			
Roofer																			
Glazier																			
Electrician																			
Painter																			

Note:

☐ Use a square to confirm the time that the designated tradesperson will be on site.

✕ Use a cross to confirm the dates you will do it yourself.

* Use an asterisk to confirm when you are shopping or organising tradespeople.

6

repairs and maintenance: make it a mantra

Maintenance is the easiest way to renovate—it is the cheapest and most cost-effective way to make a property seem like new again. There are essentially two types of maintenance:

- **Scrub-up maintenance**—These are the hard jobs that are done infrequently but make a difference to the way a property looks.
- **Regular maintenance**—These are the boring drudgerous tasks that need to be undertaken on a daily, weekly or monthly basis to keep the property looking neat and tidy.

'Our floorboards were old and scratched and looked grim. We found out they were oiled, which meant we couldn't paint them with polyurethane without sanding them right back. So we hired a floor polisher for around $80 a day and applied some beeswax and a sealant and the floorboards came up looking terrific.'

Trish, Perth

Maintenance is intrinsic to a property's value. An old-fashioned kitchen or bathroom that is well maintained and clean can seem just as valuable to a potential purchaser as a renovated kitchen or bathroom. All real estate agents will tell you that a well-maintained and tidy property is more appealing than a renovated but poorly maintained property.

While many renovators rush to put in new kitchens and bathrooms, falsely believing it will 'add value' to their property, they forget the mantra of maintenance. Maintenance will pay you back ten-fold if you invest your time in it. A property that is neat and well looked after will always be worth more than one with a dishevelled garden and a new kitchen.

SCRUB-UP MAINTENANCE

When you start looking at your property with renovator's eyes, it is easy to overlook the obvious signs of lack of maintenance—you think you need to repaint or recarpet or go over the top to cover up the grossness of what lies before you.

Stop! Remember the mantra—Maintenance is easy (relatively), maintenance is cheap (relatively). And, hey, it keeps you off the streets. A good scrub is always the most effective way to enhance a property, whether it's an 80-year-old unit or a ten-year-old house.

Most scrub-up maintenance tasks horrify people like me who can't even seem to get housework under control. But, when you break down these tasks, there are really only three simple levels of scrub-up maintenance:

- **Basic cleaning**—Using a cloth, some elbow grease and an appropriate cleaning product. Anyone can do it, yes, anyone. It's simple stuff like cleaning a stovetop.
- **Hard scrubbing**—These jobs take a lot of elbow grease and appropriate cleaning products and are reserved for less frequent problems, such as the black gunge around the elements on a stovetop.
- **DIY needed**—These jobs may require a trip to the hardware store but even the most hopeless handyman can at least try to tackle them. They are basic repair tasks such as replacing the element on a stovetop.

'Using some sugar soap and a nail brush on some old enamel-painted architraves brought them up nicely—all the old fingerprints and grime disappeared. There were still a few paint chips, but it meant we didn't need to repaint them until later on.'

David, Perth

Common scrub-up tasks

- **Bathroom**—Regrout the tiles, polish the chrome or brass taps, new shower curtain, clean everything, learn to replace cracked tiles.
- **Kitchen**—Regrout tiled splashbacks, polish taps, scrub walls with sugar soap to get rid of built-up grease, clean windows, clean stove, move furniture around to create a more sensible layout, tidy display shelves.
- **Living area**—Clean walls, wash or professionally launder soft furnishings like curtains or blinds, polish wooden floors, steam-clean carpets and furniture like lounge suites, clean windows, clean skirtings and architraves with sugar soap, polish door handles and light fittings.

Scrubbing aids

Art gum eraser—Good for getting rid of black shoe scuffs on kickboards and skirting boards.

Bicarbonate of soda—A deodoriser for the fridge, a cream cleanser for the bath; used with vinegar it will unclog drains and kill mould on tiles.

Toothbrush—Not for teeth, but for scrubbing the hard-to-get-at areas in the kitchen and bathroom.

White vinegar—A great window cleaner, especially with scrunched-up newspaper sheets. Excellent mould repellent in bathrooms.

- **Bedrooms**—Clean dirty marks off walls and light switches, launder soft furnishings, steam-clean carpets, iron the bed linen, air pillows, clean skirtings, tidy wardrobes and drawers.
- **Outdoor areas**—Weed garden, tidy edges of lawns and garden beds, empty gutters, sweep paths, use a high-pressure cleaning hose to clean mildewy areas (as long as there are no water restrictions), re-pot plants, remove and replace all dead plants, tidy tools.

Table 6-1
The kitchen maintenance planner

Kitchen	Gentle clean	Hard scrub	DIY repairs
Cupboard doors			
Cupboard carcasses			
Benchtops			
Splashback			
Taps			
Doorknobs			
Refrigerator			
Stove			
Oven			
Rangehood			
Light fittings			
Floor			
Kickboards			
Miscellaneous			

'Gently wiping grease marks on an old lino floor with some Jif and a wet cloth actually worked—it took an hour of elbow grease, but the floors came up like new and we didn't need to replace them.'

Karen, Adelaide

Table 6-2
The bathroom maintenance planner

Bathroom	Gentle clean	Hard scrub	DIY repairs
Floor			
Walls			
Bath			
Shower			
Toilet			
Vanity			
Taps			
Wall cabinet			
Light fittings			
Miscellaneous			

The maintenance mantra

Survey the scene first: Complete the planners in the Scrub-Up Maintenance section.

Plan, think, act: Plan the tasks you need to do, prioritise and then get going.

Have the right tool for the job: Don't attempt to change a washer on a tap if you don't have a shifting spanner. Always know the tools you need for the job and make sure you have them before you start.

Don't clean a surface if it really needs repair: Why waste time scrubbing skirting boards if they are rotten?

If it isn't broke, don't fix it: If it isn't dirty, don't waste your time cleaning it.

Work out your maintenance schedule: Tidy daily, clean floors once a week, clean bathroom on Tuesdays after washing hair, clean toilet on Thursdays—do what works for you. You don't have to be neurotic about cleaning, but you do need to find a schedule that suits you.

Table 6-3

The living area maintenance planner

Rooms*			
Formal living and dining room Family room Dining room Lounge room			
Tasks	**Gentle clean**	**Hard scrub**	**DIY repairs**
Floor			
Walls			
Skirtings			
Windows			
Architraves/door frames			
Heating/cooling			
Soft furnishings			
Storage			
Lounge suite			
Coffee table			
Electrical equipment			
Rugs			
Miscellaneous			

* Circle the room this table will apply to.

Table 6-4

The bedroom maintenance planner

Rooms*			
Bedroom 1			
Bedroom 2			
Bedroom 3			
Miscellaneous			

* Circle the room this table will apply to.

Tasks	Gentle clean	Hard scrub	DIY repairs
Floor			
Walls			
Skirtings			
Windows			
Architraves/door frames			
Heating/cooling			
Soft furnishings			
Storage			
Rugs			
Miscellaneous			

Table 6-5

The outdoor area maintenance planner

Areas*			
Backyard			
Front yard			
Side areas			
Tasks	**Basic tidy**	**Hard-core yard work**	**Replace or DIY repairs**
Garden beds			
Pot plants			
Large trees/shrubs			
Herbs/flower beds			
Paved areas			
Undercover areas			
Storage areas			
Shed			
Garage			
Paths			
Driveway			
Eaves			
Pool			
Gutters			

* Circle the area this table will apply to.

REGULAR MAINTENANCE

Once you have expended enough elbow grease tidying your place, it makes sense to work out the regular maintenance requirements of the property. Yeah, it's kinda dull but you can create a schedule that will work for you. You can even pin it on the fridge and offer bribery to ensure all household members comply. It is so much easier to regularly undertake small amounts of work to keep a property neat and tidy than wait for the one giant clean-up which takes hours.

For example, washing the dishes, tidying and cleaning all surfaces in a kitchen is a daily maintenance task that isn't too hard to fathom—but if it was left as a weekly task, imagine how hideous it would be! Well, if you schedule maintenance tasks BEFORE they really need attention, it keeps things easy and a property looking beautifully maintained.

Table 6-6
Kitchen regular maintenance planner

Task	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Three-monthly	Six-monthly	Yearly
Tidy						
Clean all surfaces						
Clean floors						
Sweep floors						
Clean light fittings						
Clean cupboards						
Clean windows						
Wash curtains/blinds						
Clean stove/oven						
Clean rangehood filter						
Clean fridge						
Clean sink						
Clean dishwasher						
Service appliances						

Table 6-7

Bathroom regular maintenance planner

Task	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Three-monthly	Six-monthly	Yearly
Clean bathtub						
Clean shower						
Clean toilet						
Clean all surfaces (tiles, walls, floors)						
Clean vanity/basin						
Scrub bathtub						
Scrub shower						
Scrub toilet						
Clean windows						
Wash curtains/blinds						
Clean extractor fan filters						
Clean light fittings						
Polish mirrors						
Polish taps						

Table 6-8

Living areas regular maintenance planner

Task	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Three-monthly	Six-monthly	Yearly
Tidy						
Vacuum or wash all surfaces						
Dust and polish all surfaces						
Clean soft furnishings						
Tidy storage areas						
Service heating/cooling						
Service entertainment appliances						

Table 6-9
Bedrooms regular maintenance planner

Task	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Three-monthly	Six monthly	Yearly
Tidy						
Vacuum or wash all surfaces						
Dust and polish all surfaces						
Clean soft furnishings						
Tidy storage areas						
Service heating/cooling						
Service entertainment appliances						

Essential property maintenance

All building techniques are based on one simple premise: Provide waterproof shelter. It is imperative that certain maintenance tasks are performed regularly to make sure your waterproof shelter stays that way. These include:

- Regular pest inspections for termites (in some areas this is recommended as often as every six months, but in general every twelve months should be adequate).
- Cleaning of gutters and roofs by removing leaves and debris, otherwise water builds up in certain areas and decays the roof material.
- Ensuring that all drains and stormwater run-off are maintained and the water freely leaves the property as it should.
- Keeping any sub-floor areas dry and free of rubbish.
- Lowering any garden beds that are directly next to the house to avoid damp penetrating the building.
- Maintaining exterior paintwork, especially on timber.

7

refurbishing

Refurbishing is one of the most exciting ways to renovate—it's all the fun and glory of shopping without the dust and hideous expense of a rebuild. Kitchens and bathrooms can be transformed into something magazine-worthy by replacing old and worn fittings. Bedrooms come up a treat with freshly painted walls and living areas can be made to look more modern with new window treatments or floorcoverings. Yep, refurbishment has a lot going for it.

A true refurbishment means leaving the structures of the room as they are and replacing the accoutrements—the fittings, paintwork, skirtings and floorcoverings. A refurb leaves the ceilings, wall structures, floor structures, electrical wiring and plumbing intact. It is more like a redecoration than a renovation.

The sky is the limit with a refurb—you can spend a lot of money, but you can also do it on a tight budget. For example, a cast-iron bathtub might cost $8500 while a plastic tub might cost around $150. You will pay the same amount of money to install and fit either bathtub, but the cast-iron one might last 10 times longer. It may also be out of fashion within five years. It's up to you what you want to spend on a refurb but don't forget that budget is still a prime consideration.

THE RULES OF REFURB

While it's always best to refurbish rather than rebuild (your stress levels will thank you), there is no point spending money on a refurb when the property is screaming out for structural renovation.

Refurbishing a poorly laid-out room or one that really needs the walls replastered or the ceilings replaced is a waste of money. You will only have to rip up your expensive refurbishments to fix the underlying structures later—ouch, that will hurt the overdraft.

Naturally, the rules of renovation planning apply here. You need to assess what you want to do and how much money you have to spend. So, just like you did in the last chapter for maintenance and repairs, you need to do a room assessment and plan how you want to approach the refurb.

Getting the sequence right

You can easily minimise the cost of refurbishment if you spend loads of time planning. Once you have planned the elements you need for a refurbishment, it is easier to shop for cheaper materials, get competitive quotes for labour and choose the finishes and fittings you would like. Planning gives you the freedom to choose cheaper options—but only if you have time up your sleeve to exercise those options.

Refurbishing desires and budgets

Remember your renovation mission statement. Remember your budget. Remember that your bank manager/mother/partner will want to kill you if you spend more than you can afford.

Refurbishing is more expensive than plain old maintenance and repairs so you need to get a handle on costs before you start. Work through all the stages of budgeting and re-read Chapter 2 for a refresher:

1. **Guesstimate**—Create a floorplan and work out how many square metres need renovating, then use the Archicentre guide to costs to get a guesstimate.
2. **Estimate**—Assess the materials you need to buy and the labour you need to hire to get a more accurate costing. You can also ask tradespeople and suppliers to give you quotes on jobs.

3. **Final budget**—Work out exactly what materials you need and their costs, and how much you will pay for labour.
4. **Estimate**—Work out how much time you will need to spend on getting quotes, overseeing suppliers, donating labour.

Refurbishing and your time

The longer you can take to refurbish a room, the cheaper it will be. Time gives you the luxury of shopping around for cheaper tradespeople and materials. It might also enable you to do some components of the job yourself—like stripping out and rubbish removal or painting. A long time period could also make it easy for you to project-manage the job and schedule the plumber, tiler, electrician and painter yourself rather than paying a builder to oversee the renovation.

If time is of the essence and you can't go without a proper kitchen for three months, it is worth spending the money on a builder. Or you can employ a kitchen or bathroom company to do the renovations in a timely manner for a fixed price (just make sure you check reputations before you sign any contracts).

Two easy ways to refurb

Move out and do everything at once

Pros: Can be quick and relatively cheap and painless, which adds to the gratification.

Cons: If costs or schedules blow out, it is more frustrating. Finding suitable rental accommodation can be painful.

Do it room-by-room

Pros: Less pressure and disruption to life. You can also get a better handle on costs; if the bathroom blows out, you can save on the bedroom.

Cons: Slowly, slowly it can drive you insane. You might also pay more in call-out fees for tradespeople, as well as find it more difficult to buy materials in bulk.

THE MOST VALUABLE ROOMS TO REFURBISH

Common wisdom suggests bathrooms and kitchens are the best rooms to refurbish for the resale value of a property, but this doesn't necessarily hold true. Louis Christopher, of Australian Property Monitors, says buyers need to know that new kitchens and bathrooms actually depreciate over time. 'Renovations just for the sake of renovations don't really add any value,' Louis says. 'Most people would rather pay more money for simple things like a double garage or an entertainment deck—features that really add to the lifestyle value of a house.'

The most common renovations are new kitchens and bathrooms, second storey additions, ground floor extensions and garages and decking. The most common trends buyers are looking for in homes relate to ease of lifestyle—outdoor entertaining areas, open-plan living with the kitchen as the hub of the house, luxury bathrooms for pampering, rooms to capture views or outlooks. So refurbishing rooms that offer to improve the lifestyle value of a house is probably the most valuable thing you can do.

It is probably fair to assume that opening a small lounge room to the outdoors by installing glass doors will be more valuable than just upgrading a kitchen. But if you have a squalid outdoor bathroom and still decide that installing glass doors to open up the lounge room to the outdoors is a more valuable move, then you need your head read. The only accurate way to get an idea of the most valuable rooms to renovate is speak to your local real estate agents about what is selling in your area and which features potential buyers are demanding. In some suburbs, an in-ground swimming pool is a great asset to a property; in others it is considered a drawback due to high maintenance and ongoing costs. Get to know what works in your local area, and refurbish your rooms according to the demands of the local real estate market.

Real estate agent Debbie Donnelly, who specialises in selling prime Sydney real estate, says refurbishments that are clean, simple and uncluttered have the most market appeal. 'People are more attracted to white tiles in the bathroom than tiles with three colours. They want simplicity,' she says.

The key to refurbishment and spending your money to best effect is to work within the current layouts of rooms, especially the kitchen and bathroom. If you don't need to move services like plumbing and electricity then your main costs

will be stripping out, buying new fixtures and fittings, retiling and painting—which will be kinder to your budget.

However, if the design of a room or the structure is fundamentally flawed, forget the refurb and save up for a rebuild. Don't waste money on cosmetic work for crap rooms which will always be crap.

Table 7-1
Kitchen refurbishment planner

Kitchen	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Cupboard doors				
Cupboard carcasses				
Benchtops				
Splashback				
Taps				
Doorknobs				
Refrigerator				
Stove				
Oven				
Rangehood				
Light fittings				
Floor				
Kickboards				
TOTAL COST:				
TOTAL TIME:				

'When we bought our rundown timber house, we only had enough money to polish the floorboards and paint the walls. But we found a painter who spraypainted our walls white and that only cost around $2500 for the entire house. We were lucky to have beautiful hardwood floors underneath the 1960s carpets so we spent another $2500 to get rid of the old carpets and polish the floorboards. Without spending heaps of money, our house was completely revived.'

Mark, Sydney

Table 7-2
Bathroom refurbishment planner

Bathroom	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Floor				
Walls				
Bathtub				
Toilet				
Vanity/basin				
Taps				
Wall cabinet				
Lighting				
TOTAL COST: TOTAL TIME:				

Table 7-3
Living room refurbishment planner

Living area	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Floor				
Walls				
Skirtings				
Windows				
Architraves/door frames				
Heating/cooling				
Soft furnishings				
Storage				
TOTAL COST: TOTAL TIME:				

Table 7-4
Bedroom refurbishment planner

Bedroom	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Floors Walls Skirtings Windows Architraves Heating/cooling Soft furnishings Storage				
TOTAL COST: TOTAL TIME:				

Table 7-5
The outdoor area refurbishment planner

Outdoor areas	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Backyard Front yard Verandah Balcony Courtyard Garden beds Pot plants Large trees Shrubs Herbs/flower beds Paved areas/paths Shed/garage Pool				
TOTAL COST: TOTAL TIME:				

REFINING YOUR REFURBISHMENT PLAN

With the confusion over the many tasks and trades involved in a refurbishment, it makes sense to use some revised planners to help keep your thoughts—and budgets—on track. Try filling in the following blank planners to summarise the planning steps you have already been through.

'We have bankrupted ourselves just buying our terrace, so all we are able to do is make our kitchen functional while we save for the kitchen we really want. I have packed away any kitchen things that I don't need and my boyfriend rigged up a bench and draining board. We are storing our day-to-day crockery in a 1930s sideboard next to our fridge and I prepare all the food on top of the sideboard. We don't see the point in spending money on redecorating when we'll eventually tear it down to rebuild.'

Alex, Melbourne

Table 7-6

Renovation planner 2: From guesstimate to final budget

Task	Guesstimate	Estimate quotes	Final cost	Own time estimate

Table 7-7

Renovation planner 3: Revised renovation plans

Revised task	Revised time allocation	Revised budget

Table 7-8

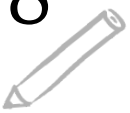
Renovation planner 4: Final renovation plan

Task	Time	Cost	Scheduled
Paint lounge	Two weekends	$840 for paint and tools	First weekends in May

'Our bathroom tiles looked skanky and mouldy so we tried to regrout them. It took us two days and was so painstakingly dull that we would never do it again. The hardest and most annoying part is chipping out the old grout—and we broke three tiles in the process and ended up having to get a tiler in anyway to fix it. It was a disaster. We should have just retiled in the first place.'

Nicole, Sydney

8



rebuilding

Rebuilding is the last resort, the worst type of renovation. It is expensive, time-consuming and very dirty—do not do it unless you really have to. There is no way you can rebuild cheaply or without inconvenience—you will need to engage a range of professionals and very possibly move out of the property while work is being done.

For the purpose of this book, rebuilding means:

- moving doors
- moving windows
- removing walls
- removing floors
- replacing structures such as roof supports, walls, footings or decks
- rewiring electricals
- replacing old plumbing
- demolishing structures.

If a property has any of the following faults, it will probably need rebuilding, at least partially.

- **Crumbling walls**—Brick walls that are close to the sea or very old may have crumbling mortar or rusted arch bars. They can be repaired or even cement-rendered or restored, but in some cases it is easier to demolish and rebuild.

- **Failed plumbing**—Old clay plumbing pipes are often cracked and broken; even 20-year-old homes can have leaky or blocked pipes or inadequate stormwater drainage. In many older structures, the only way to replace the plumbing is to break open the wall cavities, but if you're lucky the pipes are more accessible (perhaps only requiring a bit of digging) or sub-floor areas allow easier plumbing renewal.
- **Old electrical wiring**—Wiring that is more than 20 or 30 years old should be replaced. However, if the wiring is well insulated and hidden in the structures of a brick house and you install a good quality safety switch, then you can keep old wiring working for longer. Any property with cotton-covered wiring must be rewired—for your own safety more than anything else.
- **Extensive rotting or decay of brick or timber structures**—Poorly maintained properties that no longer have structural integrity (for example, they shake when you push the walls or the floor is unsound) need to be replaced. Sometimes a structural engineer can restore and repair the area.
- **Inadequate roofing and roof supports**—Leaking roofs can be fixed—there is no need to rebuild if there is a leak or some cracked roof tiles. However, the timber supports for a roof can rot or be damaged by termites, and in these cases you have to rebuild them.
- **Wide-reaching termite damage**—When termites damage the supporting beams and bearers of a building, the only option is to exterminate the pests and rebuild the damage.

DO THE REBUILD TEST

External walls

- Are the walls straight and level? Most walls are slightly off (even builders don't usually get them as level as they would like), but check for bulging and dampness at the base, which indicates rising damp and potential structural problems.
- Is there sub-floor ventilation? Good airflow beneath a wall is critical for long-term survival against termites and damp.
- Check weatherboard for rotting.

- Check the base of wooden door frames and verandah posts for termite damage.
- Check the mortar in bricks. If it is crumbling and missing, it will need replacing or cement-rendering. Look also for rusted brick ties, which could indicate that water has penetrated the wall.
- Check the underside of the eaves—if there's waterstaining or mould, you could have roof problems.

Roof

- Check the line of the roof—are there any dips in the roof?
- Check a corrugated steel roof for sarking (an insulating underlay—it looks a bit like foil) and insulation and check that the steel sheets have been installed correctly (e.g. overlapping joins, enough screws in each sheet).
- Check tiled roofs for broken or missing tiles.
- Check that gutters are secure and not rusted out.
- Check old brick chimneys, especially for bricks that are coming free from mortar, which can make them structurally unsound.

Inside the roof space

- Check for sagging roof framing, cracked tiles, rusted steel roofs, leaking ridges or valleys—all are signs that materials need replacing.
- Look at the quality of the electrical wiring—most modern wiring is well insulated, but older wiring may have cracked insulation.
- Have a sniff—if it smells mouldy and damp, there are probably leaks. Look around for mouse and rat poo or signs of possums. Vermin in roofs can lead to leaks and problems.

Timber floors

- You must check for borers, termites or fungal decay. Borers leave squiggly worm holes in timber, termites leave mud tunnels, and a pale powdery mould is often found where there is fungal decay. Scratches or patches of missing varnish or finish aren't troublesome.

- Jump up and down on the floor to check the strength of the bearers and joists—the older the timber floor, the stronger the timber will be (it seasons over time).
- Check what is holding up the timber floor—piers, stumps or walls. Check the integrity of what is holding up the floor (brick piers often crumble, timber stumps can rot and dwarf walls can have damp problems).
- Check if the timber floor is level (most are not) but, more importantly, look for gaps between the floor and skirting boards or door frames. These gaps will show you how much the house has 'moved' from its original position.

Concrete floors

- Check if the concrete floor is level. Homes built on a concrete slab should have more level walls and floors than timber floors—but sometimes they don't.
- Check if the orange plastic membrane which is laid under the slab is exposed; this could indicate the slab was not laid properly.
- Make sure there are weepholes or ventilation holes in the external brickwork close to the ground and that these have clear airflow.
- Look for cracks and shrinkage in the concrete—this is evidence of structural problems.
- Sometimes builders don't let slabs cure for long enough before tiles or carpets are laid—check if tiles are buckling or if carpet is mouldy; this could mean the moisture from the slab is transferring to floor coverings.

Interior walls and ceilings

- Check if walls and ceilings are straight and true—if they deviate by more than 5 mm, it could be a sign of warped framing timbers.
- Are the walls made of 'frame and plasterboard' or cement-rendered brick cavity? Check the type of construction—it is easier to rewire and fix plumbing in framed walls.
- Check that the underside of windows is not moist—poorly flashed windows leak and cause structural problems (flashing is used to make windows waterproof).

- Look for cracks or signs of movement in the ceiling, especially near cornices.
- Check for mould and waterstains on ceilings; this could indicate leaks in the roof.
- Make sure all windows can be opened properly; if there is excessive condensation on the glass, it could be a sign of dampness.

Electrics

- Check if all light switches and power points work and make sure there is no sign of burning or melting around switches, fittings and fuses.
- Make sure a safety switch, not just a circuit breaker, is installed on the main board. Safety switches save lives and are worth paying for.

Plumbing

- Fill the bathtub and sinks then unplug and check how quickly and efficiently the water drains away.
- Look for damp ground around external drains—this can be caused by cracked pipes or poorly plumbed drainage.
- Make sure downpipes on the outside of the building are connected to the stormwater drain or a collection tank rather than expelling water near the house where it may cause damage.
- Water hammer—a loud sound in the pipes—indicates poor plumbing. While you can fit a device to stop the sound, eventually you may need to replace the pipes.

Overall design

- Are the rooms the correct size for your needs? Rooms less than 2.5 m wide are usually too squeezy.
- Do the living areas flow to the outdoors? This gives you the feeling of more space without building more rooms.
- Are there enough bathroom facilities for the number of people living in the house? Only households of three or more persons really need to have two toilets.

- Is the kitchen connected to the living areas?
- Does the layout or floorplan of the property work well? Could it work better if you merged two rooms into one to create a better, larger space?
- If there are stairs, are they in a good place and do they meet current building codes?

REBUILDING AS ALTERATIONS

Alterations and additions make up the largest proportion of the Australian renovation market in most capital cities—especially the addition of open-plan family rooms with upgraded kitchens. There is a rough rule of thumb that if more than 60 per cent of the house needs to be altered, it is cheaper to knock it down and build a new house from scratch.

However, there are some good reasons to alter rather than demolish, including:

- sustainable re-use of existing materials
- to maintain the architectural integrity of the house
- to maintain old building approvals that would not get council approval today, such as distance from the street or other buildings and height limits.

Altering existing buildings can be fraught with danger. The Can of Worms factor (see page 9) must be taken into account—once walls are pulled apart, myriad building problems can be revealed. More than with any other type of renovation, you always need more money than you initially budget if you are going to rebuild.

DEMOLISHING TO REBUILD

A growing trend is the 'knock it down and rebuild' market, where people demolish an existing house and build a well-priced new home on the same site. This is extremely cost effective, especially in areas where land is in short supply. The simple fact is that project homes are the cheapest to build because builders

buy materials in bulk and program the tradespeople so efficiently that it is difficult for a non-project builder, let alone a DIYer, to do it for a cheaper price.

Most brick-veneer project homes can be built for $900–1300 per square metre. This price does not include demolition of the existing home (site costs), landscaping or fencing. Take a good look at your renovation estimate—it might be more cost-effective to build a new home.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH BUILDERS AND PROFESSIONALS

Altering structures is a long and tedious process that will always need professional input. The biggest decisions are made during the pre-construction phase, and this is when you'll need to engage with professionals. They include:

- **Architect**—A highly qualified building designer who can design buildings, oversee council approvals, specify the materials to be used during construction and even oversee the construction. In Australia, architects can charge a percentage of the entire construction cost as a fee (usually 8–16 per cent) or an hourly rate (usually $80–200 per hour).
- **Building designer**—Similar to an architect but may not be degree-qualified or registered as an architect. Some are highly skilled, others have less experience, so it's important to shop around. Experienced building designers can charge the same price as architects, so they are not always cheaper.
- **Draftsperson**—Can draw plans for new buildings, but may not have the same design skills as a building designer or architect. They cost $35–80 per hour (cheaper than architects and designers) and are invaluable for simple building jobs such as garages, decks or studios.
- **Quantity surveyor**—Usually works with professional construction companies but can be invaluable for owner-builders or people unfamiliar with specifying and costing building jobs. They charge a similar amount to architects, but are not 'on the job' for as long. They can accurately calculate the quantities of materials needed in a construction job and can sometimes work with drawings or design professionals to find cheaper methods of construction.

The darned dogs

If you have a dog—beware. Inviting subcontractors to your renovation site can be fraught with danger, as many take their dogs to work (hey, they can be better company than people, and often guard the tools on a truck). This can make your dog a little tetchy about the doggy hierarchy. Dog fights are common in renovation and rebuild situations, so try to keep the peace by warning subcontractors that you have a dog onsite. Pay your tradespeople for doing their trade, not separating fighting dogs.

- **Builder**—A licensed builder is not always a tradesperson, or the one getting their hands dirty onsite. They provide the quote for the building job and will project-manage all trades and oversee delivery of materials onsite. The builder is ultimately responsible for the quality of the completed building, the safety of workers onsite and the delivery of the building contract.
- **Surveyor**—Usually engaged at the design or pre-construction stage to provide exact dimensions of the land site; building designers and architects often need to know height levels, boundaries and land contours to submit development applications.
- **Engineer**—There are many different types of engineers—geotechnical, hydraulic, structural, electrical, traffic … the list goes on. Engineers are not always needed but can be engaged to make sure structures will stand up, as well as find the cheapest method of achieving it. Traffic engineers work out the details of carparking, car access and street access. Structural engineers are most commonly engaged in renovating.
- **Heritage adviser**—Usually a conservation architect or historian who can write the heritage impact statement which accompanies development applications for historic buildings. Not always needed.
- **Flora and fauna consultant**—Some acreage sites or environmentally sensitive land sites need to be assessed for development impact on local plant and animal life. Not always needed.

- **Design and construct builder**—Some licensed builders also offer design services and can oversee the entire building process from design to construction. There are also licensed bathroom and kitchen building companies who offer this type of service.
- **Landscape architect**—A designer who devises working drawings for the garden areas around a building. Usually charges a similar rate to an architect, and offers advice on outdoor structures such as retaining walls and pergolas as well as on plant selection.
- **Town planner**—Usually employed by councils to assess development applications, but they can also be engaged by people wanting expert planning advice.

It's all in the design

It is well worth paying an architect or building designer for a renovation report. The design of new rooms or a new house is the starting point for success or failure as a built space—when you invest in good design, the outcome will easily be worth the extra cost. If you want the benefits of good design, but want to minimise the cost, you can draw the floorplan yourself, taking all room measurements and noting where doors and windows are. Then write a detailed design brief, including:

- How do you use each room?
- What activities are done in each room?
- Which styles of fittings and finishes do you like?

A designer can then work from your brief to develop the concepts for your approval.

THE PRE-CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN STAGES

1. *Design brief*
   This is something only you—the person who will live in the property—can devise. What type of accommodation do you need, how many rooms do you

want, what is your budget? You need to gather a tight design brief before you spend money on professionals. It can take you a week to three months to get a brief together, but it will be worth every minute.

2. *Design*
   A professional is engaged to create the working drawings, which usually show a floorplan and elevations of the design, as well as shadow diagrams. It is also important to have cross-sections of the designed building to see how it is constructed. Make sure you check the council's lodgement requirements at the design stage (see below).

3. *Lodge plans and council approvals*
   Lodge the working drawings and required paperwork with the local council and other approval bodies (such as for water and sewage). This process can be lengthy—two weeks to six months—and will involve a notification period for the neighbours.

4. *Specifications and construction certificate*
   The working drawings are only part of the plans needed to construct or rebuild—specifications of materials are even more important. The specifications outline the materials to be used and the quantities, and give a more accurate building cost. Many councils need these specifications before they give you final approval to build and issue a construction certificate.

5. *Tenders*
   Using the working drawings and specifications, ask builders or individual tradespeople to quote the cost of building or the job. Make sure all builders are using the same specifications so you can compare the quotes and estimated completion times.

6. *Construction*
   This is the messy phase, which often involves demolition and careful programming of trades. Construction can take as little as a month but an average project

home would take at least three months to build. Project homes and design-and-construct houses can be built to 'lock-up' stage, which confusingly doesn't mean the building is able to be locked up! The building is often deemed habitable once the kitchen and bathroom are in place and working; 'lock-up' is the term given to a building before the internal wall linings are in place.

7. *Move in*
   Yaaay!

8. *Maintenance*
   Most builders will come back to touch-up final finishes after you move in. Ensure you work out a suitable maintenance schedule to keep your property in good condition (see Chapter 5).

Different ways to rebuild

$ Go out—extend the current building to the front, back or side
$$ Go up—add another storey
$$$ Go down—if the site allows, excavate to create a lower ground floor

APPROVALS AND BUILDING REGULATIONS

You should always, always, always check with your local council about the regulations and approvals needed for your property. Generally speaking, just repairing and replacing current structures does not require permission but any work that involves moving windows, doors, adding rooms or demolition (even of an internal wall) may require council approval.

The local council usually has planning guidelines called development controls, local environment plans or development plans. Sometimes, however, the state government overrides these controls with state-based planning legislation (such as a Planning Act); for example, in New South Wales any beachfront coastal

land is governed by state planning laws rather than local planning laws. Some areas of environmental or heritage significance have specific planning controls.

The regulations governing building quality are national and are reflected in the complex and highly detailed Building Code of Australia which is updated every six months. The states often add their own codes to the national requirements.

It would be rare for any renovator or builder to be entirely au fait with every building code and planning requirement—that's why there are council inspectors and independent building inspectors to certify buildings. If buildings fail their inspection, it can involve costly repair work, so it's worth being familiar with the necessary requirements.

Table 8-1

Will you need council approval?

Type of work	Type of tradesperson	Council permission
Repairing cracks in walls	Plasterer, builder	No
Installing a new kitchen	Plumber, electrician, carpenter, builder, kitchen design and construct company, joiner, tiler	No, if the walls and floorplan remain intact
Installing a new bathroom	Waterproofer, tiler, plumber, builder, bathroom design and construct company	No, if the walls, doorways and windows remain intact
Replacing doors and windows	Carpenter, joiner, builder	Generally no, but you need permission if changing the size of the openings or if the property is in a heritage area
Electrical work	Electrician	No, but Building Code of Australia regulations require smoke detectors to be installed

Plumbing	Plumber	No, but some councils require solar hot water heaters if replacing hot water services
Structural alterations inside	Builder, carpenter, design and construct builder	No, if there are no structural walls being removed, but check with local council
Attic conversion	Builder, architect, design and construct builder, carpenter, electrician, plumber	Yes, if you are changing the roof line and adding more volume to the house; there are also Building Code of Australia regulations to adhere to
New fence or garden wall	Structural landscaper, landscaper, fencer	No, but you often do need neighbour's permission to construct boundary fencing
New path or driveway	Structural landscaper, landscaper, concreter	No, unless you need to alter the kerb or street entry; you may need to check local planning provisions
Pruning or removing trees	Tree lopper, landscaper, arborist	Yes, many local councils have orders requiring approvals to prune more than 5 per cent of a tree or remove it
Installing TV antennas or pay TV	Electrician, antenna installer, pay-TV contractor	No, but if the property is in a heritage area there may be constraints
Building a carport	Builder, design and construct builder, carpenter, concreter	Yes, but some councils allow certain regulation-sized carports to be constructed without permission

Type of work	Type of tradesperson	Council permission
Building a deck	Structural landscaper, carpenter, builder	Yes, but some councils allow small decks to be constructed without permission
Building a garage	Builder, design and construct builder, carpenter, concreter	Yes, but some councils allow regulation-sized garages to be constructed without permission
Extending the house	Builder, design and construct builder, electrician, plumber, tiler, carpet layer, landscaper	Yes
Installing a skylight	Builder, carpenter, skylight installer	No, but it is worth checking as some councils require approval if the skylight is visible from the street
New roof	Roofer, roof tiler, builder	No, if the replacement materials and the roof shape remain the same. Note there are tough new occupational health and safety requirements for scaffolding on roofs, which can be expensive.
New patio or outdoor entertainment area	Structural landscaper, paver, builder	Yes, if you exceed floor space ratios (hard surface to soft surface ratio) or add a structure, such as a pergola

NAVIGATING THE PLANNING APPROVAL PROCESS

Most builders and renovators dread the development approval process—in most cases it is time-consuming, costly and can seem pernickety and ridiculous. Many councils take longer than six weeks to approve alterations and additions and there can be huge inconsistencies in planning decisions.

It is worth making sure you lodge the best designed plans possible—plans without adequate detail can hold up the approval processes. For alterations and additions, you need to show elevations, floorplans and demolition work, and you often need to detail environmental and heritage effects as well as lodge waste-management plans. There is a lot of paperwork involved, but getting it right means a speedier approval process.

Most neighbours will have the right to make a submission in regard to your plans, so it is worth getting their support for your plans before you lodge them with the council. Neighbours can legitimately object to plans on the grounds of:

- **Overshadow**—when you obstruct sunlight to their gardens or living spaces.
- **Privacy**—such as windows that look into neighbouring gardens or interior rooms.
- **Setbacks**—the plans must comply with setback guidelines in local planning controls provisions—there are often local rules about how far a building must be from the boundary or the street.

9

kitchens

Aaah, dream kitchens. This is the room that is easy to blow the biggest bucks on. Designer stainless steel appliances? Sure. Granite benchtops? Bring 'em on. But when the $50 000 kitchen bill arrives, many a renovator can regret their choices.

The kitchen is one of the most important service rooms of a home. It is used for cooking and often as the focus of living and eating spaces. Spend the money that you believe is appropriate for your lifestyle choice.

There are two types of kitchens—fitted kitchens with built-in cupboards, or freestanding kitchens which have moveable cabinetry but a fixed kitchen sink and stove. Freestanding kitchens are more popular in Europe, where people often take their kitchens with them when they move house. If you are renting but want to upgrade a kitchen, investing in freestanding units which you can take to any property is a worthwhile choice.

The essence of all good kitchen design lies in the configuration of the cupboards, cooking area and sink. Then it's about having the right appliances for your needs—is a built-in coffee machine really important to you or can you make do with a benchtop model that you can take with you if you move? A good design is also about ensuring that the finishes on cupboards and benchtops are appropriate to your needs.

Ideally, kitchens have a minimum space of about 8 square metres and at least one window (that preferably does not face west, otherwise the heat from the afternoon sun will cook you while you cook dinner!). The sink is usually under a window, and the fridge is close by, with its door opening in a way that

does not block access to the sink or a doorway or other amenities. The oven and stove are also close to the sink and there's a bench beside them to put hot food on. A dishwasher is built in close to the sink, and if there is a double sink, the drainer is on the same side as the crockery storage cabinets.

What type of kitchen do you need?

In my experience, there are four types of kitchen renovators. It helps to decide what type of kitchen renovator you are so you know where to invest more of your budget. Remember, a cheap kitchen renovation can start at $1000 but fitting a whole new kitchen can be as expensive as $55 000.

1. The glamour kitchen
Many renovators simply want their kitchen to look more modern and to become a design feature of the home. This renovator will spend money on high-quality finishes like cupboard doors, splashbacks and appliances. A budget of at least $10 000 is necessary.

2. The chef's kitchen
Some renovators will live without the décor as long as they have the right appliances and configuration to whip up a dinner party. For this renovator, spending money on appropriate appliances and cooking services is important. A budget of at least $13 000 is necessary.

3. The functional kitchen
Some people go batty trying to cook every day in a kitchen that has no bench space or can't accommodate two people. This renovator just wants to change the configuration. This could be achieved with some ingenuity and a budget of as little as $1000.

4. The budget kitchen
Other renovators don't care much about the function of the kitchen, but need it to look presentable for resale. For this renovator, cost is the most important consideration. If the current fittings and fixtures are serviceable and all that is necessary is some maintenance, paint and the replacing of door handles and splashbacks, a budget of as little as $1000 may be adequate.

KITCHEN COMPONENTS

Kitchens are expensive because of the amount of materials used. These include:

Cupboards

The expensive part of the cupboard is the door—it can be melamine, timber veneer, solid timber or polyurethane. The doors are attached to the carcasses, and with the benchtops this assembly forms the common kitchen cupboard.

You can buy carcasses cheaply from suppliers and fit your own doors to save money, or you can engage a kitchen company to look after all supply and installation.

Cupboards can be custom-made by a carpenter or architect, but it is cheaper to use a kit kitchen. These usually consistent of melamine carcasses with hinged doors or drawers attached. The carcasses are propped up on legs to which a kickboard is attached. Kit cupboards are mass-produced in factories and then assembled onsite in your home. These are the most common type of cupboards for kitchens—they are used in most new apartments and houses as well as in renovations.

Benchtops

The finish of a benchtop is dependent on price—laminate is the cheapest, with granite and stone at the expensive end. Benchtops are fitted on top of cupboard carcasses, at a height of between 850 mm and 950 mm, with holes cut out for sinks and stoves. If you are handy, you can try installing them yourself but, if your measuring is slightly off, it can cost you a lot for a new linear strip of benchtop material.

Door handles and hardware

'Hardware' refers to the hinges that hang the cupboard doors and the drawer runners. Look for good-quality solid metal hardware rather than plastic.

If you're refurbishing or just maintaining and repairing, remember that shiny new door handles will revive a tired old kitchen.

'We saved loads of money by using a cheaply made kit kitchen but then spent nearly as much again on stainless steel handles from an architectural hardware supplier. It looked really good when we first did it, but after just two years, the white melamine started peeling back and needed to be replaced. If we had spent more money on a better kit kitchen in the first place, it would have lasted longer. At least we've still got the handles!'

Ken, Brisbane

Dishwashers

There are dishwashers for all applications and they can range in looks from standard white to stainless steel or integrated models which look like another cupboard. Most are 600 mm wide, but there are also 450 mm wide models to save space (although these usually cost around the same price as the 600 mm ones).

Washing up

Dishwashers can be built-in, portable or benchtop mounted and can usually be plugged into a normal power point. If you have hard water, you may need a water softener. The low-water usage models save the most money in the long term and usually operate at a water temperature of 50°C.

Fridges and freezers

Leaving space for the right fridge or freezer is important when planning your kitchen, as they vary widely in size. You can also choose to buy integrated refrigerators that are concealed as part of the kitchen cabinetry. The size of the fridge or freezer you buy will depend on the number of people it has to service. Couples who live in the inner city and eat out will need something much smaller than a family with three kids.

Fridgey-didge

The fridge is one of the biggest power consumers in the home, so choose an energy-efficient model which will suit your needs. Make sure there is good ventilation around a refrigerator so that it doesn't have to work at its maximum energy output. Good-quality refrigerators have thick insulation around the refrigerated area to maximise power efficiency.

Stoves and ovens

You get what you pay for when it comes to cooking equipment. Separate stovetops and ovens are more flexible, as you can lay out your kitchen in a way that suits you. Ranges (with the oven and stove in one unit) are often sturdier. Electric cooking equipment has gone high-tech and now can be just as efficient as gas. The better the cooking equipment, the more powerful the heat and the more control you will have over it.

New generation cooking

These days, most ovens are electric and are often permanently wired on their own circuit. Gas stovetops are popular, but require good rangehoods to cope with the heat and steam output. There is a new generation of steam and convection cookers that use low energy but offer good-quality cooking results.

Exhaust systems

The more you spend on powerful cooking equipment, the more you will need to spend on ducting the cooking fumes out of your kitchen. Many cheap apartments or project homes have a rangehood that vents into the ceiling cavity, which is not good if you cook a lot of stir-fries at high temperatures—the steam carries droplets of fat into the ceiling cavity, leaving your ceiling prone to damage and your house

smelling like a fast-food outlet. The cheapest rangehoods are the single-motor slide-out types starting at around $500; the good quality, top-ducting rangehoods with stainless steel canopies can cost between $1500 and $5000.

> *'Our biggest mistake was the rangehood—we bought this pathetic slide-out thing that ventilates all the cooking fumes into the cupboard above it! Ridiculous! The kitchen fills with smelly smoke whenever we cook. We should have ducted it properly.'*
>
> Chris, Sydney

Splashbacks

These go above the benchtops on the walls to protect them from splashes of grotty food and fat. They can be cheap and cheerful—a lick of gloss paint—or high-tech and expensive—green glass panels or marble.

Kickboards

These are attached between the floor and the bottom of the cupboard carcasses and stop dirt from getting underneath your kitchen cabinets. They are, literally, the boards your shoes will kick against, so if you wear dark-soled shoes, don't get white kickboards. The kit kickboards usually come routed with a little gadget to attach them to the legs of your kitchen cabinets. Melamine is cheap and commonly used, but kickboards can be created in any finish such as timber, aluminium or even granite.

Floors

Kitchen flooring should be practical. It is worth spending money on a good quality, non-slip and easily washable floor surface in the kitchen as this will be the dirtiest floor in your house. Cheaper efficient options include linoleum or vinyl-lock flooring (can be as cheap as $30 per square metre). If your budget has room for style and efficiency, stone flooring could be the go, but the price will be well over $120 per square metre.

Lighting

Task lighting is important in the kitchen—you need good light over the sink, the stovetop and preparation areas. Plan your lighting needs in advance and go for washable and hardwearing light fittings.

Taps

You need one good-quality kitchen tap—usually a mixer. Most taps, regardless of price, will do the job you need them to do, but some people are prepared to pay a lot more for the right design.

Electrics

If you change the configuration of a kitchen, the power points to run the dishwasher, rangehood, fridge and stove may need to be moved. It is also wise to plan where you need benchtop power points and install 'quad' points rather than 'doubles'.

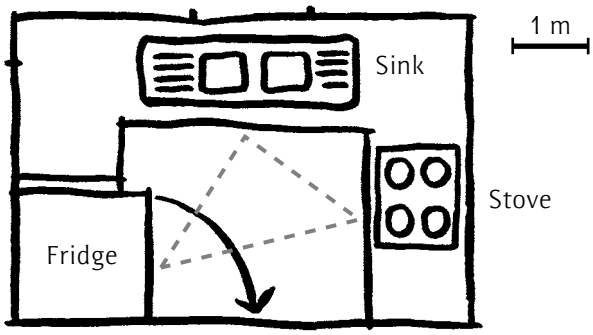
Plumbing

The kitchen sink, garbage disposal unit and dishwasher should be the only kitchen features that require plumbing. These can be moved, but bear in mind that it is cheaper to leave any plumbing where it is as moving drains and pipes can be expensive.

Laundry facilities

Installing laundry facilities in a kitchen can be a useful space saver, but make sure you check the latest Building Code of Australia requirements and amendments. There are two key issues when it comes to creating a concealed laundry within a kitchen. One is making sure that there is enough ventilation in the cupboard for the washing machine and dryer to run efficiently (some cupboard manufacturers are creating ventilated—and expensive—doors for this purpose) and the other is creating space for a separate laundry wash tub.

KITCHEN DESIGN—THE WORK TRIANGLE



Most kitchen design experts agree that you need a 'work triangle' between the sink, fridge and stove (above). These are the appliances you will use the most and you need an unbroken walk, of 3.5–4.5 metres, between them. Here are some examples of kitchen layouts:

The L-shaped layout

This is suitable for small or narrow rooms, especially in terraces or semis. There will be a lack of bench space, but adding a roll-away chopping block can help.

The U-shaped layout

This is the most space-efficient kitchen, offering the most bench space and a good working triangle.

The galley kitchen layout

Another good use of small space, but beware of fridge doors blocking the thoroughfare.

The island bench layout

The classic country-style kitchen, this layout is great for large rooms or kitchens near open-plan family and dining rooms. Beware of making the working triangle too large to be efficient.

Diagram 9-1
The L-shaped layout

Diagram 9-2
The U-shaped layout

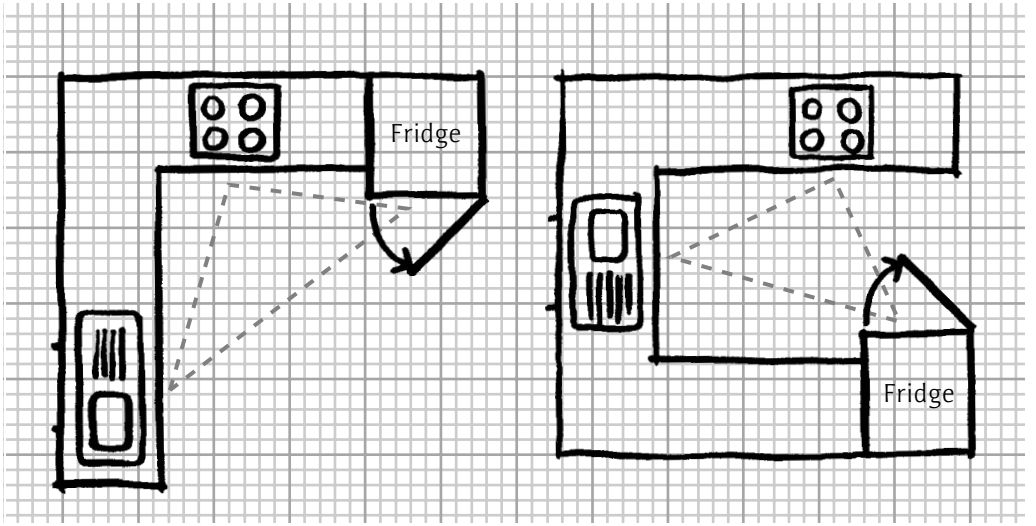
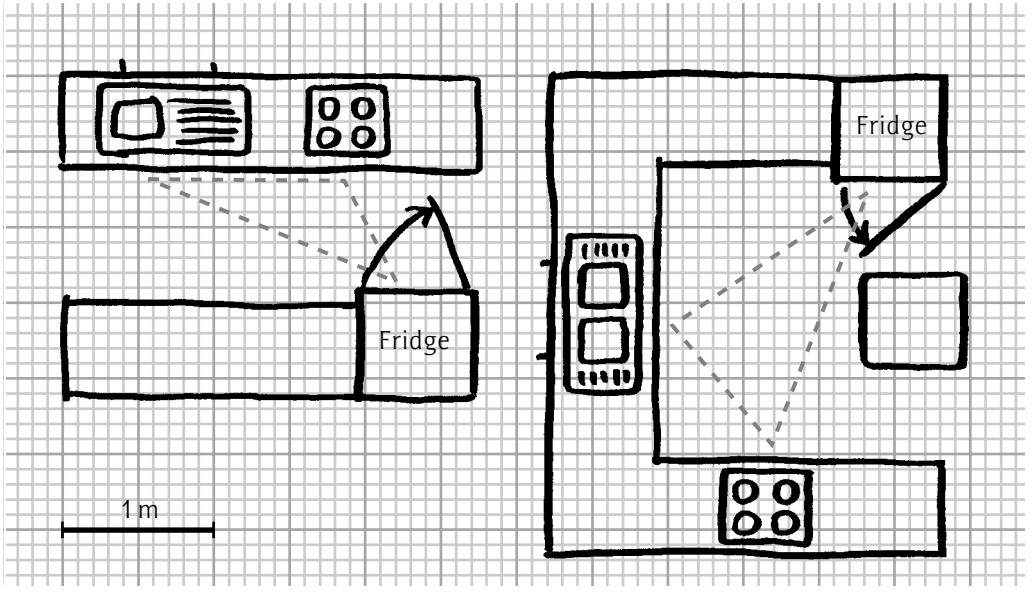


Diagram 9-3
The galley kitchen layout

Diagram 9-4
The island bench layout



HOW TO SAVE MONEY ON KITCHENS

Planning is the best money-saver. Use the kitchen grid planner (see page 93) to form your designs and know your plans and measurements off by heart. If you come across a bargain, you will then know instantly whether it will work in your kitchen—it's no good paying 15 per cent less for a fridge if it doesn't fit in the cabinet space.

Sometimes, paying a kitchen company to re-do the kitchen is the most cost-effective way for a busy family to renovate a kitchen. There's no point in putting up with a makeshift kitchen for three months to save money if it means forking out for takeaway for a family of four for 92 days!

For the budget-conscious, you could spend less than $10 000 on a kitchen renovation provided you have the time to invest in shopping around and you can do things yourself. Often, you can re-use existing kitchen components and spend money on the things you really need—maybe a new stove or a modern splashback?

Seconds and second-hand kitchen fittings are easily obtained through factory-retail outlets, auction houses, the *Trading Post*, and demolition yards. Auction houses can sometimes take your plans and, for as little as $3000, give you a standard U-shape or L-shape configuration which you can tailor to fit your home.

Buying a second-hand kitchen through the *Trading Post* or eBay can save you thousands, especially if you know what you are looking for. If you just need new appliances, search only for good appliances. Check the auction listings in the Saturday newspapers—sometimes manufacturers auction their end-of-year stock and run it out for half the retail price.

Talk to other renovators about how they saved money on a kitchen or where they think they blew their budget.

'We bought a beautiful solid timber kitchen out of the Trading Post for $900 and then spent about $300 on benchtops and $100 revarnishing the timber. It's worth looking around for bargain second-hand kitchens—if you buy something that was good quality five years ago, the chances are it will still be good quality today.'

Alison, Melbourne

THE SEQUENCE OF RENOVATING A KITCHEN

Stage 1—Preliminary work to be done in advance of main construction
Stage 2—Construction work
Stage 3—Final fit-out

Table 9-1
Scheduling a kitchen renovation

Task	Ordering time for materials	Stage of schedule	Potential for delay
Determine kitchen layout and appliance sizes, including plumbing and electrical layout	n/a	Stage 1	Nothing can be ordered until the design is finalised
Ordering light fittings, appliances and ventilation requirements	Order 4 weeks in advance of needing it	Stage 1, electrician and builder to install in Stage 3	Yes: make sure fittings and appliances are on site before installation
Ordering kitchen carcasses and cupboards	Custom kitchens may need to be ordered 12 weeks in advance of installation; standard modules should be ordered 4 weeks in advance	Stage 1, builder to finish in Stage 3	Yes: manufacturers often have back-logs, so ensure the carcasses and cupboards can be onsite before the finishing trades arrive
Ordering benchtops	Manufactured stone can take up to 8 weeks to order; some laminate workshops can process an order in 4 weeks	Stage 1, carpenter, builder or kitchen company to install in Stage 3	Yes: make sure benchtops are onsite for final stages of fit-out

Ordering other prime cost items like taps, kitchen sink, garbage disposal	Some items may require a 6–8 week ordering period, but standard budget items can be bought on the same day as needed	Builder and or plumber to install in Stage 3	
Stripping out old kitchen	Rubbish removal necessary	Stage 1	Yes: it is hard to take delivery of new materials if the old stuff is in the way
Any building repairs to walls, floors or ceiling	n/a	Stage 2	Yes: there is no point fitting out a room until repairs are done
Floors tiled	Done	Tiler does this in Stage 3	Yes: cannot walk on tiled floor until adhesive has set
Plumbing and electricals 'roughed in'	Trades usually supply materials	Plumber and electrician to install in Stage 2	Yes: delays in Stage 2 will mean delaying Stage 3
Kitchen cabinets and kickboards installed	Done	Builder, kitchen company, joiner or carpenter does this in Stage 3	Yes: the plumber often can't do a final fit-out until stage is complete
Benchtop installed		Builder, carpenter, joiner or kitchen company does this in Stage 3	Yes
Sink, stove, dishwasher and other prime cost items installed		Builder, electrician, plumber or kitchen company does this in Stage 3	Yes
Splashback tiled	Done	Tiler does this in Stage 3	Yes
Painting	Done	Painter does this in Stage 3	

'My husband is an architect and he created extra-deep cupboards then used sliding doors at bench height so things like toasters and kettles can be put away neatly. We still had 600 mm deep benchtops, but 900 mm deep cupboards with 300 mm of space in front to hide stuff in at bench height.'

Karen, Sydney

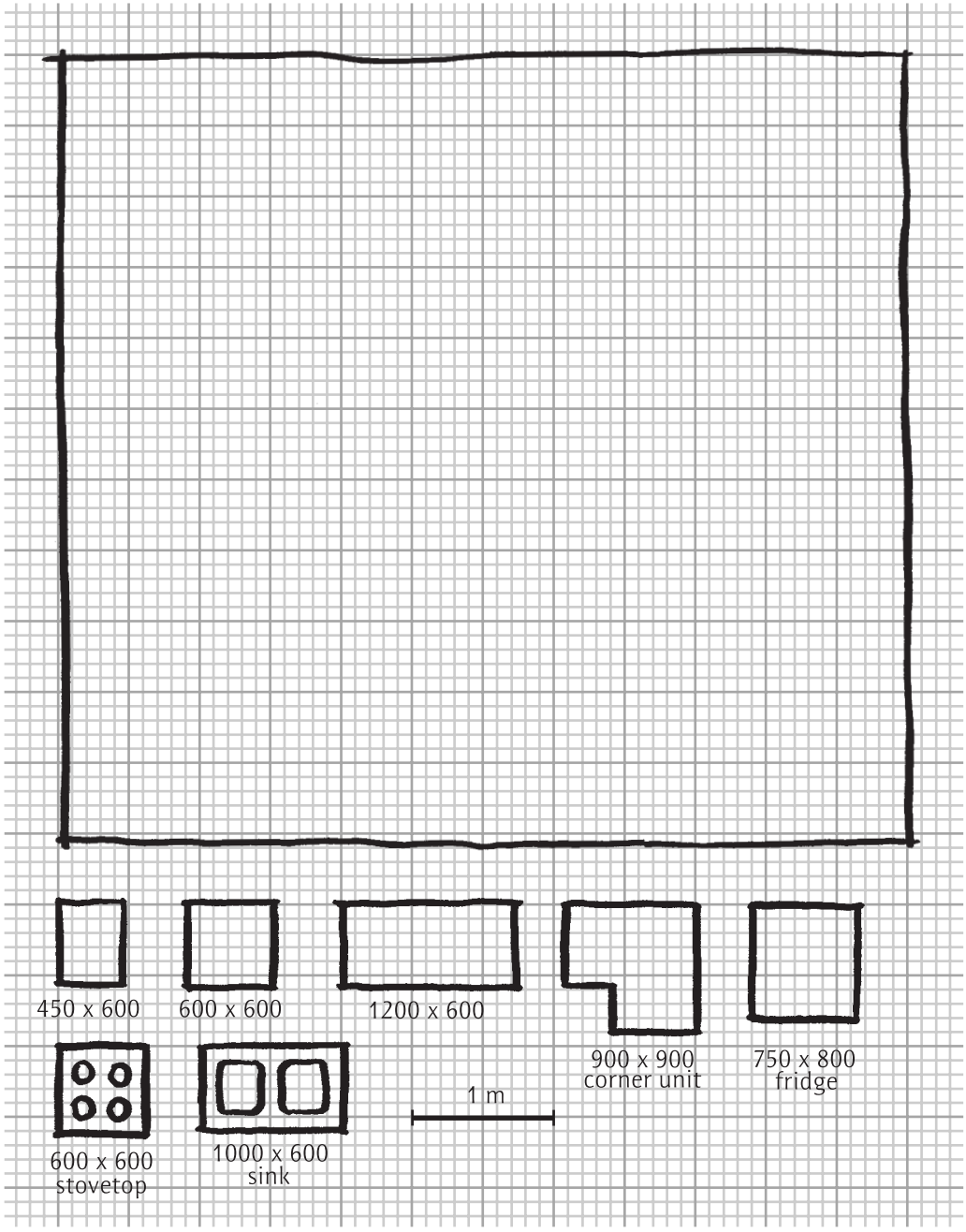
KITCHEN PLANNING TEMPLATE

Using templates on grid paper can help you plan the fine details of your kitchen layout. All you have to do is measure your rooms and note the positions of doors, windows, power points and plumbing on your grid. Then cut out your templates and arrange them on the plan to try different kitchen layouts.

'I really wanted designer stainless steel cooking appliances but we couldn't afford the $4000 price tag as we had blown all our money just buying the house. The stove we had was serviceable but could not cook at high heat. So I bought a second-hand commercial stove, which would have cost around $5000 new, for $300 from a catering firm. I paid $300 to have it serviced then spent $1000 on a top-venting rangehood and created the kitchen I really wanted for a fraction of the price.'

Sue, Melbourne

Diagram 9-5
The kitchen grid planner



10

bathrooms

Bathrooms are no longer just outdoor service rooms—they have come a long way since they moved indoors in the early twentieth century. Although it is usually one of the smallest rooms, it is one of the busiest, so the bathroom finishes and fittings need to be durable and waterproof.

One of the biggest issues in bathroom building in Australia is adequate waterproofing, especially around showers. The Building Code of Australia outlines waterproofing standards, but many builders argue that these are not strict enough. Leaking shower recesses damage walls and floors and often mean rebuilding is necessary within ten to fifteen years. In small bathrooms, condensation can be a problem as well. Adequate ventilation and waterproofing are vital to ensure that a new bathroom will last a long time.

The essence of all good bathroom design is configuring the space for a household's needs. The minimum size for a bathroom is around 1.8 m x 2.2 m, if you want a bathtub, basin and toilet. A shower usually requires a minimum space of 850 mm x 850 mm, although the more elbow room, the better. If the vanity unit or bathtub or toilet have to face each other on opposite walls, there should be at least 600 mm between them to allow freedom of movement.

Separate toilets need a minimum size of 1.8 m x 1 m and the door should open outwards so that if someone faints or collapses in the toilet, the door can still be opened easily. Try to avoid toilets in view of the front door.

WHAT YOU WANT IN YOUR BATHROOM

A family of six will have different needs to a bachelor or an elderly person. Ask the following questions to help devise your ideal bathroom design:

- **Storage**—What items need to be kept in the bathroom? How much space do you need to allocate for items such as medicines and cosmetics? Do you need an area for hair, make-up or shaving equipment? Will you use a hairdryer in the bathroom? Will you need a medicine cabinet? Will a vanity unit be enough to store everything you need in your bathroom?
- **Lighting**—Harsh fluorescent lighting can be disastrous in a bathroom—especially for women applying make-up. However, the all-in-one heat and light lamps can be horrific for bald heads—some can actually give a bare scalp 'sunburn'. Choosing appropriate, durable and safe lighting is of primary importance in the bathroom. The mirror and basin areas need to be well lit, but the rest of the bathroom might benefit from more atmospheric lighting to create a relaxed mood. Exhaust fans are also good in the bathroom for removing steam—but make sure the steam escapes to an area outside the building so it doesn't cause water problems in a ceiling or wall cavity.
- **Bath/shower**—All bathrooms have them, but do you need a separate bath and shower? Or does space dictate a shower only or a combination of the two? Work with your floorplan to see what fits best. You can get freestanding shower units that can be installed in a corner or along a wall and come complete with walls and floor. If you are desperate for a bathtub, but don't have much space, look for a corner bath or a smaller tub that can have a shower placed over the top of it.
- **Vanity/hand basin**—A hand basin can be used instead of a large vanity, but will it offer enough storage? Make sure you buy a vanity that can withstand the rigours of a water-filled environment. Cheap melamine vanities can start losing their adhesive in the moist bathroom environment. Watch out for the hidden costs of buying drains and wastes when buying basins or vanities. You might also want to check the height at which you get a vanity or hand basin installed. Most builders will use a standard height of around 650 mm from the ground, but if you are tall, an 800 mm height may be more suitable.

- **Toilet**—How many toilets does your household need? There is a modern trend to install three or more toilets in one house, which seems ludicrous. One separate toilet and one in the main bathroom is enough for even a large family. Ensuite bathrooms seem to be considered a necessity in most modern houses, but if you don't have a large number of people living in the house it may be an unnecessary expense.
- **Tiles**—What type of tiles do you want? Floor tiles? Wall tiles? Do you want to save money by only tiling the wet areas on the walls above the bath and the basin or do you want floor-to-ceiling wall tiles? Which finishes will look best?
- **Tapware**—Do you want flick mixers or ordinary mixer taps? What about the bath and shower? Do you need high-quality design and style or will basic do? Think also about floor wastes—do you want to spend $30 or more to get a stylish metal floor waste or just $5 on a plastic cheapie?

What type of bathroom do you need?

The bathroom is a tricky room to renovate as all householders use it equally. What does your house need?

1. The luxury retreat
A bathroom to soothe the work-weary soul can be a delight for a busy professional couple. Deep spa baths, double-basin vanities and high-quality fittings and finishes make the bathroom a pleasure to be in. A budget of at least $10 000 would be needed.

2. The family wash room
Some renovators are happy to have a clean, simple bathroom that is functional enough for the entire family to use (that usually means a separate toilet!), with fittings and finishes that are timeless enough to look good for ten years or more. Using bottom of the range but highly durable fittings and finishes, a bathroom renovation like this can be done as cheaply as $8000.

3. The budget bathroom
Some renovators only need a bathroom to look presentable for resale or one that is clean and tidy. For this renovator, cost is the most important consideration. If the current fittings and fixtures are serviceable, just regrouting tiles and cleaning the area can be done for less than $500.

PAMPERING BATHROOMS

One of the biggest trends for bathrooms is for them to be more like pampering zones than just service rooms. If a bathroom offers an escape from the rush of everyday life, it can be a strong value-adder to a property. Here are some ideas for pampering bathrooms:

- **Sunken baths**—There is something about stepping down into a bath rather than over a ledge that adds a sense of luxury.
- **Flexible hand-held hose shower**—Often used in Europe to convert baths to showers, these can offer luxury when used in addition to fixed shower heads—you can spray warm water over aching backs and necks, and wash your back and front at the same time. If designed as part of a rebuild, the extra cost can be as little as $150.
- **Spa bath**—No longer just an isolated luxury, spa baths can start as low as $1000—but the more money you pay, the better the quality of spa jet. Try to budget for one with an automatic de-scaling and cleaning system—it makes the spa bath look better for longer. An everyday bath can also be easily converted into a spa bath with a pump and a few spa jets.
- **Multi-sensory shower chambers**—These are too expensive for most people to afford, with prices starting at around $15 000. They offer Turkish bath-style deep cleansing with built-in benches to sit on while being sprayed with alternating hot and cold jets of water (the water can even be scented!). Steam cabins have overhead and hand-held showers and function as a steam room as well as a shower.
- **Designer taps, basins and bathtubs**—Designer brands often offer stronger styling and smarter looks than the everyday affordable brands—but they come with hefty price tags. Think cannily about mixing expensive taps with cheaper basins and bathtubs to get a similar look without the cost.
- **Garden bathrooms**—Think like the Japanese and offer windows with a garden outlook (just make sure your garden is private). It's even more resort-like to have bifold windows near a bath that can be opened up so you can enjoy the view.

'The bathroom never had enough space to store the towels, medicine stuff and cosmetics that collect in there—so we used some kitchen cabinets on the wall in the bathroom to create more storage space.'

David, Sydney

BATHROOM COMPONENTS

Shower

The shower rose can be installed over the bath or in a separate shower unit. For waterproofing purposes, it is better to have a separate shower unit—something with its own raised water tray at the bottom. Shower units can be shaped to fit a corner (or any other space). Triple AAA-rated shower roses use less water.

Waterproof membrane

Underneath tiled areas is a waterproof membrane, usually made of silicone. It stops water from penetrating the grout and tiles, and the joins between the floor and wall, and damaging structures. A tiler will apply the waterproof membrane around the shower area only, but many builders recommend waterproofing the entire bathroom to avoid future problems.

'We built an ensuite bathroom into our attic extension but we didn't put in an exhaust fan—now the tiles are constantly mouldy and the mirrors are always fogged up.'

Cynthia, Melbourne

Toilet

The good ol' dunny has come a long way in the last 50 years. There are two main types of toilets—the floor-exit trap where the plumbing goes through the floor, and

the wall-exit trap which has a pipe through the wall to the sewer. The three parts of the toilet are the pan (the bit that sticks to the floor), the toilet seat (made of acrylic or timber), and the cistern (the bit that flushes). There are compact cisterns to use in small rooms, concealed cisterns to use in fancy rooms and close-coupled systems where the cistern is designed as part of the pan. Of course, there are highly stylised and expensive toilets on the market as well as cheap ones (which start at about $200 for cistern, pan and seat). Dual-flush systems save water. With Australia's strict plumbing standards there are rarely odour problems with a well-maintained toilet.

Tiling

There are all kinds of tiles for all sorts of applications—ceramic, vitrified, marble, granite, terracotta, glazed, unglazed, tessellated, glass, mosaic . . . the list goes on. Cheap tiles start at about $15 per square metre; imported designer tiles can be $300 or more per square metre. Generally speaking, wall tiles can be larger than those used on the floor because walls are usually flat and level. Using large tiles on the floor can be problematic if there is an uneven floor surface, and large tiles might need unsightly diagonal joins to follow the form of the floor.

Try DIY?

Tiling is hard. Bloody hard. By all means give it a go, but be aware that it will take you three times as long as a professional and the job may not look as slick. Tiling is all in the preparation of the surface—you can tile over previously tiled surfaces but it will not look as good as tiling onto clean, dry, flat and stable floors or walls. If you are giving tiling a go, it's a good idea to choose larger tiles because you don't need as many per square metre and can get the job to look more even. Conversely, if you need to put a fall in the floor for drainage, it is better to use smaller tiles.

Try to avoid using glass tiles if you are attempting DIY. If the surface isn't prepared properly and water gets behind the tiles, mould can set in and then you have a really ugly disaster—expensive see-through tiles that can only be cleaned by chipping the tiles off and starting again. Stick to neutral-coloured grout rather than anything too flamboyant in colour, which may just show off your mistakes.

Floor tiles are usually thicker, to withstand the heavy foot traffic, while wall tiles are less durable and more decorative. Glazed tiles are easier to keep clean. Border and feature tiles are more expensive; there are also gap-filler tiles such as bullnoses and quadrants or mitres to cover the joins between walls and floors—although sometimes silicone sealant is all that is used. Glass mosaics are fashionable but are generally used on feature walls, as they can chip when used on floors, and the grey grout necessary to bed them into place can be unsightly.

Vanity units and hand basins

These can be cheap, mass-produced polyurethane cabinets or exquisitely hand-made timber stands with vitreous china basins. They are priced accordingly, with cheapies starting at around $200 and the posh ones going all the way to $4000 or more. Vanities have taken over from hand basins because of the extra storage they offer. Double-basin vanities have also become popular—two people can clean their teeth and have a basin each at the same time. The biggest issue with vanity units is durability—cheap melamine vanities do not last long in the wet and moist bathroom environment. Timber surfaces need to be well sealed to handle the moisture without warping.

> *'When we renovated our bathroom, I didn't specify how high I wanted the vanity unit to be—so now I'm stuck with this vanity unit for midgets. The taps are too low and it's hard to get my hands under them. It's a nuisance to do my make-up at the vanity because I have to stoop.'*
>
> Karen, Sydney

Bathtubs

Modern bathtubs are made from steel, glass-reinforced plastic or acrylic. Fancy reproduction cast-iron bathtubs are available, but they can weigh so much that you need three people to lift them, and they can be difficult to clean behind or panel in. Steel tubs are the most durable and are effective heat insulators, but are

more expensive. Cheaper acrylic ones—which can start at around $120—can be harmed by abrasive bathroom cleaners. Bathtubs can be rectangular or shaped to fit in a corner, and come in various widths. Most modern bathtubs are supported by hebel bricks and then tiled into a panel.

THE SEQUENCE OF RENOVATING A BATHROOM

Stage 1—Preliminary work to be done in advance of main construction
Stage 2—Construction work
Stage 3—Final fit-out

Table 10-1
Scheduling a bathroom renovation

Task	Ordering time for materials	Stage of schedule	Potential for delay
Determine bathroom layout	n/a	Stage 1	Nothing can be ordered until the design is finalised
Ordering light fittings, appliances and ventilation requirements	Order 4 weeks in advance of needing it	Stage 1, electrician and builder to install in Stage 3	Yes: all light fittings should be onsite before the electrician arrives for Stage 3
Ordering vanity unit	Custom vanities should be ordered 6 weeks in advance; off-the-peg vanities can usually be bought on the same day as needed	Stage 1, plumber to install in Stage 3	Yes: the vanity needs to be onsite for the tradespeople to do the fit-out
Ordering tiles (floor, wall, border etc.)	Special tiles may need to be imported or sourced 6 weeks in advance;	Stage 1, tiler to install in Stage 3	Yes: the tiles should be onsite before the tiler arrives

Task	Ordering time for materials	Stage of schedule	Potential for delay
	many varieties only require a few days or can be bought on the same day as needed		
Ordering toilet, bathtub, shower tray, taps	High-end design prime cost items should be ordered 6–12 weeks in advance; others can be bought on the same day as needed	Stage 1, plumber to install in Stage 2	Yes: the prime cost items should be onsite for Stage 2
Ordering bathroom accessories like mirrors, towel rails, toilet roll holders, toothbrush holders	Special items may require a 6–8 week ordering period, but standard budget items can be bought on the same day as needed	Builder or tiler to install in Stage 3	
Stripping out old bathroom	Rubbish removal necessary	Stage 1	Yes: none of the trades can start until the space is clear of unnecessary materials
Waterproofing	Subcontractor (sometimes also a tiler) to supply waterproofing material	Stage 2	Yes: waterproofing substance needs to cure before tiles are laid
Any building repairs to walls, floors or ceiling	n/a	Stage 2	Yes: it makes sense to have this done before final fit-out, when messy repairs could spoil nice new fittings
Floor waste, sink waste, toilet waste, shower waste, bath waste and all water supply and drainage	Plumber usually supplies materials, although high-end designer items may need to be purchased separately	Plumber to install in Stage 2	Yes: make sure everything is onsite or available to the plumber as needed

Bathtub, toilet, shower tray, taps roughed in	Done	Plumber, builder or tiler may install some of these items in Stage 2	Yes: if materials are unavailable or the schedule of plumber–builder–tiler breaks down
Electrics roughed in	Done	Electrician ensures all wiring is in the right place in Stage 2, waiting for switches and fittings to be installed in Stage 3	Yes: if there is a hitch at this stage it will delay the ability of other trades to work
Floor fall to drain organised	n/a	Tiler should confirm, builder may organise this in Stage 2	Yes: cement may need time to cure before tiles are laid
Floor tiled	Done	Tiler does this in Stage 3	Yes: cannot walk on tiled floor until adhesive has set
Walls tiled	Done	Tiler does this in Stage 3	Yes: if waterproofing is complete the walls can be tiled
Final fit-out—tap handles, vanity, shower screen installed	Done	Plumber or builder may do this in Stage 3	
Electrical fit-out	Done	Electrician returns to install switches and fittings in Stage 3	
Painting	Done	Painter does this in Stage 3	

'We had the tiniest bathroom in our unit, so we replaced the shower curtain with a clear glass shower screen and painted the room white to make it look bigger. We also put in a huge mirror on the wall above the basin to reflect light and create a feeling of space.'

Lydia, Sydney

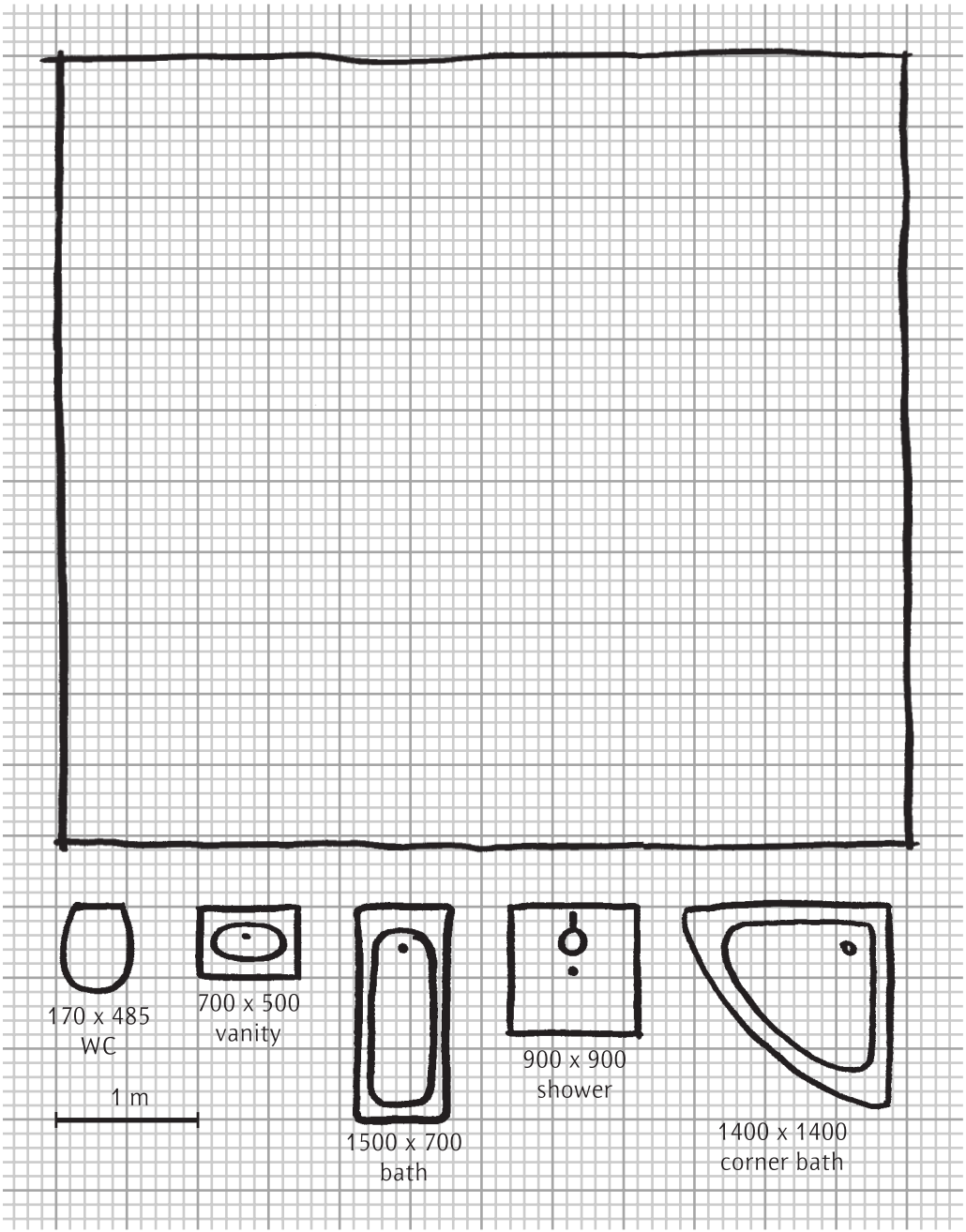
Table 10-2
Calculating tiling quantities

Area to be tiled	150 mm x 150 mm tiles	300 mm x 300 mm tiles
1 sq m	45	12
2 sq m	89	23
3 sq m	134	34
4 sq m	178	45
5 sq m	223	56
6 sq m	267	67
7 sq m	312	78
8 sq m	356	89
9 sq m	390	100

BATHROOM PLANNING TEMPLATE

Use the bathroom grid planner opposite to help plan your bathroom layout. The templates represent common fixtures and fittings. All you need to do is measure your room and note the doors, windows, power points and plumbing. Then draw the room onto the grid paper, cut out the templates and arrange them on your plan to try different room layouts.

Diagram 10-1
The bathroom grid planner



11

living and sleeping areas

The kitchen and bathroom may be the hardest rooms to renovate, but living spaces can be just as tricky if you have high design ideals. Living and sleeping spaces need to be comfortable, have complementary furnishings, offer the right storage space for the room and fulfil the individual functions each family requires.

A LIVING SPACE CHECKLIST

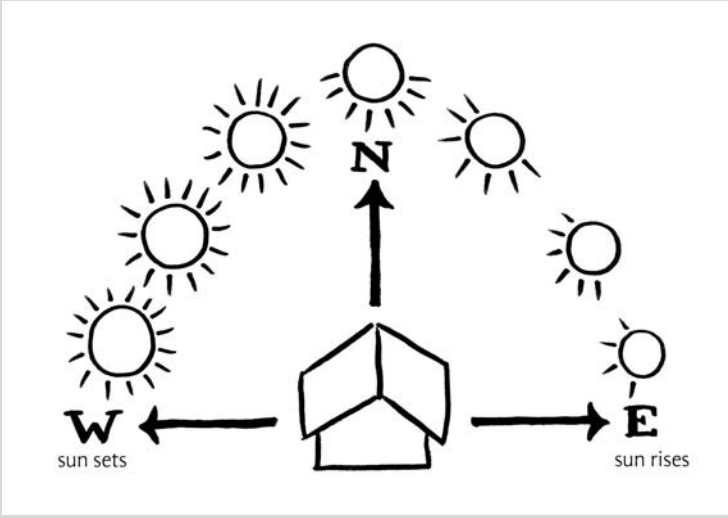
In many homes, a living space near the kitchen is seen as the most functional. In smaller households, it might be nicer to have a separate living space away from the kitchen. Every household has a different need for living spaces. Ask these questions to decide what you want in your living space:

- How many living areas do you need—can your family share one open space or do parents need their own area?
- Does the living space need to be larger? Or would it appear larger if it was better connected to the outdoors or was opened into an adjoining room?
- Is there any unused space in the house—such as an attic or garage—which can be turned into extra living space?

- Do your living spaces need a lot of natural light? If so, then they need to be on the northern or eastern wall of the house.
- Does your living space need hardwearing, durable floors or are carpets better for your needs?
- Which items really need to be stored in the living space? Can the books and DVDs be stored in a nearby study?

Aspects of living

There is a difference between magnetic north (where the compass points) and solar north. Every geographic location has a different solar north from magnetic north—sometimes the variation is 2 degrees, sometimes it is 20 degrees.



EAST: The sun rises in the east so rooms that benefit from morning sun and warmth, such as the room where you have breakfast, are best situated here. Some people like being woken by the morning sun and so prefer an east-facing bedroom. Most solar-passive houses will not have windows on the east.

WEST: The sun sets in the west and this is the hottest aspect with the hardest light. Rooms with west-facing windows and external doors get hot in summer

and often need awnings or verandahs. West-facing windows may need external awnings or shading to stop the harsh afternoon sun in summer from overheating the room. This can be the best place for service and storage rooms like laundries.

SOUTH: Because we live in the southern hemisphere, this is the aspect that gets the least natural light. It is often dark and cool, and some southern walls have problems with mould and damp. However, a north–south aspect is good for ventilation and light, especially if there is little glazing on the east and west walls.

NORTH: This is the most prized aspect of any living space. Real estate agents proudly proclaim a beautiful north-facing front yard . . . which is useless if all the living spaces are at the rear. The northern aspect gets sunlight all day long. This is the best aspect for living and sleeping areas.

Table 11-1

What needs to be in your living space?

Item	Dimensions	Lighting needed (accent, atmospheric or task)
Armchair or armchairs		
2-seater or 3-seater sofa		
Modular sofa		
Coffee table		
Footstool		
Television		
DVD/video		
Stereo		
Computer		
Speakers		
Bookshelf		
Storage for DVDs, CDs, books, magazines		
Storage		
Rugs		
Phone table		
Heating/cooling		
Dining table		
Extras		

Table 11-2
Scheduling a living area renovation

Sequence for materials	Ordering time for materials	Stage of schedule	Potential for delay
Floors Walls Skirtings Windows Architraves/door frames Heating/cooling Soft furnishings Storage			

SLEEPING SPACE CHECKLIST

Bedrooms have different functions for different family members. Children sometimes need their sleep areas to be play areas or study areas as well. Some couples like their bedroom to be a retreat from the world, while others insist that their bedroom has a TV, stereo and even office and computer equipment nearby. It's a personal choice that will reflect individual needs. Think of the following when planning bedrooms:

- What size bed do you need? An ensemble will take up less space than a bed with a frame and bedhead.
- What type of lighting do you need? Overhead lighting, bedside lighting and lighting to get dressed by?
- What sort of storage do you need? Built-in or freestanding?
- Do you want cosy rugs or carpets on the floors or serviceable floorboards?
- How dark do you want the bedroom to be? Do you need to pay the extra for block-out blinds, shutters or curtains?
- Is the bedroom cool enough in summer to sleep well? Will you need a ceiling fan?

- Heating bedrooms can be expensive, especially if you're paying for warmth while you sleep, when a good-quality doona will suffice.
- Do you need chests of drawers or bedside chests?
- Can you fit extra storage under the bed?
- Where can you hang a full-length mirror?
- Do you need to add a study alcove or reading area to the sleeping space?
- What are the ceilings like? This is the only room where you will regularly look at the ceilings.

Table 11-3
What needs to be in your bedroom?

Item	Dimensions	Lighting needed (accent, atmospheric or task)
Bed		
Clothes storage		
Chest of drawers		
Bedside chests		
Storage chests		
Wardrobes		
Mirrors		
Bedside lights		
Floor lights		
Rugs		
Chair		
Sofa		
Computer		
Desk		
Exercise equipment		
Library shelves		
TV		
Stereo		
Heating/cooling		
Other		

'We needed some office space, but couldn't sacrifice a bedroom. So we transformed our laundry into an office and washroom by installing a few extra power points, a phone line and task lights and a pull-out desk inside some big cupboards.'

Diana, Sydney

Table 11-4
Scheduling a bedroom renovation

Sequence for materials	Ordering time for materials	Stage of schedule	Potential for delay
Floors			
Walls			
Skirtings			
Windows			
Architraves/door frames			
Heating/cooling			
Soft furnishings			
Storage			

LIGHTING UP

Lighting is the easiest way to create a mood or atmosphere. Good lighting can create a warm atmosphere, highlight a beautiful object or transform the character of an interior by introducing areas of light and shadow. Bleak, overhead and bare light bulbs make a space seem unfriendly and unrelaxing, while a few table lamps or uplights can make a room seem soothing and welcoming. Light that's too bright just dazzles and drains, and a dim, dark room is depressing.

There are three different types of lighting:

- **Atmospheric**—Ambient or atmospheric refers to a room's overall lighting and the mood it creates. Living spaces and bedrooms feel more comfortable with soft light that fills the entire room. Often, in these areas, the main source of ambient light is a pendant lamp in the centre of the ceiling. You can also use table or floor lamps to illuminate dark corners and provide a softer overall effect or fit dimmers on lamps and ceiling lights to allow you to change the mood.
- **Task**—Task lighting illuminates places where you *do* things: kitchen benches, desks or reading spots. TV-watching requires task lighting, too: the light should come from behind the viewer.
- **Accent**—Accent lights highlight particular features in a room, like a painting, indoor plant or even a great sound system. Downlights can be good at focusing attention on certain spots in a room.

In living rooms the lighting needs to be versatile. Seating areas need lights at a low level, positioned so a book or magazine is illuminated from beside the reader. Working at a desk is similar, but the light source must be in front of you, but not shining into your eyes, to avoid your shadow being cast over the work. Concealed lighting can work well to bounce light off ceilings. There are all types of lights to create atmosphere in living spaces—pendants, downlights, wall lights, recessed lights and lamps. Dimmers are a great idea to easily change the mood of a room.

In bedrooms, bedside lamps are basic requirements but you can also fit concealed lights into a bedhead to create a different atmosphere. Dressing tables may need their own light source, while wall lights or downlights in the ceiling can create the atmospheric lighting. In children's rooms, bedside lights need to be tamper-proof or even avoided.

You need to calculate how many power points you want in a room. With the advent of pay television, broadband, surround sound and smart wiring, you will also need to think about the other wiring or data connections you want in a room. It is better to put in more power points than you need, than to scrimp on them. Oh, and quad power points probably make more sense than single or even double power points.

'Dimmer switches were the best thing we paid for. They can really change the mood of our living space, especially if we have guests over.'

Karen, Sydney

GETTING WIRED

It makes sense to have power points and other wires or cables where you need them, and it will be more economical to do it all in one go.

'When we rewired our living room, we put in "smart wiring" with remote control lighting and stereo and TV controls. At the press of a button we can play music and even turn on an outdoor light if we hear a noise outside.'

Lydia, Melbourne

Table 11.5
Guide to the number of power points in a room

Room	Recommended number of power points	Number of power points the room actually has
Kitchen	at least 6	
Lounge room	at least 4	
Main bedroom	at least 3	
General bedrooms	at least 2	
Other rooms	at least 2	
Laundry	at least 2	
Garage	at least 2	
Workshop	at least 4	

ON THE FLOOR

There are all types of floorcoverings which suit living and sleeping areas, but the main choice is something soft (like carpet) or something durable (like tiles). Of course, within these two options the range is infinite:

- **Carpet**—Most carpets are made from a blend of wool and acrylic, although you can get carpets made only of wool, which is considered more hardwearing than acrylic. The nature of the pile is important to its feel and appearance, and the underlay is integral to the look of the laid carpet. Carpet must be vacuumed regularly and can also be damaged by insecticides, bleach products and the rigours of children's textas.
- **Floorboards**—These can be made from solid timber or thin timber veneer. They are easy to maintain, and hold their appeal, but can get scratched and dented easily by moving heavy furniture across them or wearing high heels. The timber industry is recommending that timber floors be finished with tung oil or something similar, rather than polyurethane, which scratches. Hardwoods are better wearing than softer woods like cypress pine.
- **Vinyl**—Vinyl floors are soft underfoot and also extremely durable and easy to clean. The more expensive they are, the better the quality. The backing on the vinyl is critical to its quality and the vinyl must be laid on a flat and dry surface. There are new interlocking vinyl floors that are easily laid, look similar to floorboards and are very cheap.
- **Quarry tiles**—Slate, terracotta or stone tiles can add a nice finish to living spaces. They can also be cold (although new underfloor heating systems are alleviating that problem) and create harsh acoustics.
- **Ceramic tiles**—These are available in a range of styles and can be cost-effective but they need to be laid on a hard, level surface. They can also feel hard and cold underfoot, especially in kitchens, where you stand up to work. They may chip if hard items are dropped on them and you need to be careful in wet areas as they can be slippery.

WINDOW COVERINGS

Windows need coverings on the inside to create an atmosphere or decorative look, but they also need them for privacy and protection. Curtains and blinds can block out sun, heat, cold, noise or an ugly view. It all comes down to the budget, and the function and look you are after. It is probably a good idea to choose simple and relatively cheap furnishings like vertical or horizontal blinds in rooms like kitchens or laundries, where light control and functionality are important. Rooms with higher design ideals, such as bedrooms or lounge rooms, might look better with full-length curtains, which can add interior detail as well as privacy.

Curtains give a room a plush, decorative look. Silks and brocade fabrics suit formal living rooms, cotton and wool are more informal and relaxed, while sheer curtains let in light. Always select the best-quality fabric you can afford and one that drapes well—make sure you check the way it hangs before you buy it.

The heading of a curtain gives it its character—whether it's formal or informal, traditional or modern, pleated or tab-topped, gathered or tied to a pole. The heading also determines how easily the curtain can be opened.

Unless you want to visually alter the proportions of a window, the curtains should frame it. The curtain rod or track should be the width of the window, plus an allowance for the side extensions (these are usually 15–45 cm each side, depending on the curtain width and fabric thickness). For short curtains, the track or rod should be fixed at a height which allows the curtains to hang just below the sill. For long curtains that hang to the floor, the rod or track should be fixed midway between the ceiling and the top of the window, or at least 10 cm above the top of the window.

Blinds can be more affordable than curtains, with holland blinds being the cheapest, followed by venetian blinds then roman and timber. Timber blinds are the most expensive and their price can horrify even the most generous renovator.

The cheapest way to buy window coverings is to buy ready-mades. These are widely available at department, homeware and fabric stores, but may not be perfectly sized for your windows (although sometimes a few simple alterations

will do the trick). Having window coverings custom-made is relatively easy and isn't always as expensive as you might imagine—the key is to find an outlet that has large volumes of custom-mades and therefore can be cost-competitive.

HEATING UP AND COOLING DOWN

Your heating needs

Heating is important in living areas, but it's also important to save energy and avoid overheating or excessive consumption of power. There are three types of heating:

- **Convection**—movement of heat through a gas or fluid.
- **Conduction**—movement of heat through a substance.
- **Radiation**—transmission of heat by a wave motion in the air.

Insulating a room properly can save as much as 40 per cent of power costs. Careful placement of a heater in relation to doors, windows and walls to provide adequate air circulation can also save running costs.

Keeping your cool

Good natural ventilation is the cheapest and most effective cooling method. Airconditioning is expensive to run and a good solar-passive design can eliminate the need for it. Ducted airconditioning is the most expensive type but split systems or wall units can be more cost-effective. Reverse cycle airconditioning is more efficient on the cooling cycle than on the heating cycle. Ceiling fans are a cheaper alternative.

As a guide to calculating the size of the airconditioning unit needed to cool an area, allow for a 125-watt output per square metre of floor space in living areas and an 80-watt output per square metre for bedrooms. Again, drafty windows or doors or large glazed areas can influence the outcome of the cooling.

PAINTING—THE FINISHING TOUCH

A room doesn't feel finished until the paintwork is done. Choosing paint colours and decorative effects can be fun and most manufacturers have a huge range of charts and software to help you make your choice.

There are many different kinds of paints so it is important to choose the right type for the job at hand. Nowadays, you should also try to stick with the one brand because mixing brands can possibly create chemical reactions and means the job won't last as long as it should.

Painting is easy to do yourself, but a professional painter will do it more quickly and do a better job. The main rule of painting is to spend three times as long preparing the surface as painting: make sure the walls are clean, dry and filled; wash all previously painted surfaces with sugar soap; and fill or sand back any fine cracks or holes in the old paintwork.

Buying professional-quality brushes and drop sheets makes doing the job so much easier than trying to be a cheap-o and having to pull out loose brush hairs from your fine painting work. Sometimes, though, it is cheaper to just get a professional painter (who already has the equipment) to do the job quickly. Some painters may be able to spray paint interior walls, which is even quicker, though not always up to the same finished standards as a brushed or rollered finish.

Pure acrylic paints are now so advanced that they can last for five to ten years and still look great. The modern acrylics can also offer lustre or limewash effects, which can look great on feature walls. Oh, and two thin coats of paint provide a better finish than one thick coat.

A guide to paints

There are two main types of paint—oil-based and acrylic. Oil-based paints are generally longer-lasting; acrylics will wash out in water. Acrylics are easier to work with and often require less surface preparation, while oil-based paints provide a tougher surface, which makes them ideal for heavy use areas. Paint will set, dry and cure on a surface, to add colour and give extra protection.

You need to plan a painting job well: make sure you calculate the preparation,

application and drying times. It's often not possible to paint a room in a day, especially if you are using enamel paints on wooden trims.

- **Flat plastic**—For interior use on rendered brick or plasterboard walls and ceilings; not great in bathrooms and kitchens.
- **Semi/gloss satin plastic or enamel**—For use on bathroom and kitchen walls and ceilings (which need to be more water and stain-repellent than other areas), as well as on architraves and skirtings.
- **Gloss enamel**—For use on interior architraves, doors, skirtings, bathroom and kitchen walls and ceilings, furniture; hard to work with, requires major clean-up and takes a long time to dry.
- **Varnish or polyurethane**—For use on timber features, architraves, skirtings, furniture and floors where wear is not excessive.
- **Exterior acrylic or oil-based gloss**—For all exterior walls, eaves, doors, windows and gutters.
- **Exterior satin**—For exterior use on all fascia boards, trims and timbers.

Working with ladders

Using ladders is a skill you should learn well. Make sure the ladder is secured and has anti-slip end caps. You can anchor a ladder by tying it to a timber rail or lashing it to the ground with stakes. Never climb higher than four rungs from the top or you won't be able to balance the ladder properly. Keep both feet on the same rung and keep your hips centred over the rung.

Paint planning

Painting is all about preparation, preparation and more preparation. And then it's about work, work and more work. Once you actually get the paintbrush out, it's not just about slopping it onto the walls. Every paint job will require cutting in, which is the term used to describe the careful border of paint you give to the edges of a wall, around light fittings, at the edge of ceilings and all of those places

where a roller will not reach. Cutting in often requires a good, firm brush and a very steady hand. Just watch a professional painter cut in and you will weep—a good painter is truly amazing at keeping a steady, straight hand and doing it quickly. Some people like to use masking tape or some kind of protection around borders like skirting boards and edges, but no matter how good the taping is, paint can still leak into areas you don't want it to.

Paint the ceilings before you paint the walls—even professional painters drip a little paint. Sometimes it helps to erect a work platform to help do ceilings and the tops of walls.

- **Painting ceilings**—Buy a thick ceiling paint, which means you only need to apply one coat. Make sure the surface is prepared well, as any irregularities will show with a thick paint. Cut in a whole area then start painting in the corner near the window. Working from the edges, paint in bands of around half a metre. Whether you are using a brush, pad or roller, apply each fresh load of paint just clear of the previous application and then blend in the junctions for even coverage.
- **Painting walls**—Cut in the wall, then start painting at a top corner of the wall. If you are right-handed, work from right to left; and vice versa. Paint in horizontal bands and always finish a whole wall before taking a break. Gloss paint is harder to work with and you may need to use vertical bands to blend the wet edges more quickly.

Table 11-6
Paint planning guide

	Interior acrylic	Ceiling paint	Enamel paint	Exterior acrylic	Special effects acrylic
Touch-drying time	30 minutes	30 minutes	6 hours	20–30 minutes	1 hour
Recoating	2–4 hours	—	16 hours	2–4 hours	4 hours
Number of coats	2–3	1	2–3	2–3	2
Coverage (sq m per litre)	14–16	12–16	14–16	15–16	14–18
Clean-up	water	water	solvent	water	water

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dealing with builders and trades

Hiring tradespeople and builders is the only way to proceed if your renovation involves rebuilding. If you think you can save loads of money by doing it yourself, think again. All plumbing and electrical work in Australia must be done by a licensed contractor, so unless you're a tradesperson, there is no way you can do everything yourself.

People who spend their lives working in offices with highly competent staff around them have no idea how hard it is to employ a tradesperson or builder (let's call them subcontractors). Human resources managers, recruiters and senior executives may have an inkling about the difficulties of hiring subcontractors, and I am here to tell you loud and clear that along with living in dust and dirt, hiring people to renovate your house is one of the most difficult aspects of renovating.

Unless you're a tradesperson or builder with some skill or experience in renovation, you're going to experience what I call the Renovation Hiring Gap—a big black hole which represents a dearth of knowledge about how subcontractors operate. This book attempts to help bridge that gap, but the only way to fill it is to spend time working with subcontractors and build up your own experience. Hiring subcontractors is a bit like taking your car to a mechanic when you don't know much about cars—trust your mechanic to do the job you want them to do for the best price. Just like some car mechanics, some subcontractors will try to

exploit that trust—but the crummy rip-off merchants don't stay in business too long. Generally speaking, any subcontractor with more than five years' experience is going to be excellent at their trade . . . but will you be able to get on with them?

There is a plethora of subcontractors out there, professionals with skills you need to renovate your property. Each one will have the basic skills of their trade, but some will also have special skills they have acquired over the years. For example, some carpenters have great skill at re-using old materials, others excel at measuring and getting structures square. Some plumbers are brilliant gasfitters but only so-so at drainage. Some builders are experts on brick veneer while others are better with weatherboard.

Every subcontractor is uniquely skilled, but they will all have individual personalities as well. Some are extremely professional and courteous, others swear like troopers. Some turn up on time, others fail to turn up for weeks. This can be frustrating for people in the Renovation Hiring Gap, but once you understand the nature of subcontractors and expect them to behave like human beings as well as professionals, the process runs more smoothly.

Treat 'em nice

The way you treat your tradespeople can boost the service you receive from them. Treating them in a way that respects their experience and professionalism is the most important thing—some tradespeople just want you to give them access to the property when required then let them get on with the job; others prefer to be offered cups of tea and biscuits and love having a chat with you while they do the job. Every tradesperson is different, but learn to respond to their particular needs and behave appropriately by:

- always being punctual (even if they are not)
- allowing the tradespeople to complete their jobs unimpeded (don't book four trades to work on the property at the same time—everyone will get cranky)
- following their advice (if they ask you to buy certain materials, have them ready on time).

THE SUBCONTRACTING LIFE

Most tradespeople and builders have spent years in their jobs building up the skills and experience that allow them to do their job well. 'It's taken me 25 years to learn how to install a tap/hang a door/rewire a house in five minutes' is what they say. As a renovator, you are buying those years of experience from the subcontractor so the job can be completed quickly and efficiently.

Some subcontractors work out of their utes or trucks and have an invoice book in the glove box. They don't have an office (although they might have a computer at home to do their accounts) and every day is a new location. Some clients are enjoyable for them to work with, others are a nightmare. Some subcontractors—especially builders—are highly skilled professionals who need to charge a decent profit margin to look after their occupational health and safety, insurance and building code requirements. Every small business person operates differently, and will choose their clients according to what makes the most sense for their business.

Judging tradespeople

It is hard enough for a skilled builder to select suitably skilled tradespeople. Here are some questions to ask and attributes to look for.

- **Skill**—What professional skills do they have? How long have they been doing the work? What type of property do they generally work on and where?
- **Reliability**—If they say they will turn up, do they? Will they leave you hanging to get the last 5 per cent of the job finished?
- **Ability to communicate**—Make sure the way you communicate about the job is clear, the materials are specified and there is an estimate of how long it should take to complete. Unforeseen things happen on all jobs but talk to the tradesperson in an easily understandable manner.
- **Demand**—Good tradespeople and builders usually have at least a few weeks' continuing work ahead of them. It is important to source subcontractors well in advance of the time when you need to book them. Be aware that lots of builders and tradespeople may give ridiculously high quotes if they are in demand because they don't really want to do your renovation.

Most subcontractors charge on the basis of an hourly rate, plus materials. Hourly rates range from $25 an hour for a labourer to $60 or more for a plumber. Profit is included in labour and materials charges. The charges for subcontractors vary according to supply and demand—when there's loads of building work and the industry is booming, then renovators with small jobs often have to pay a premium price to attract subcontractors away from the large ongoing jobs. Like most small business people, most subcontractors want to maximise their earnings in the easiest way possible. Small renovation jobs are often difficult, have hidden costs and force clients and subcontractors into new and unknown relationships—it's hardly surprising that some subcontractors stay away from renovation jobs.

WHY CHANGING YOUR MIND COSTS MONEY

When you ask a subcontractor to quote on a job, they sometimes add a 'buffer' to allow for anything going wrong that will take them more time. For example, an electrician may quote on rewiring a house without realising that old termite damage in the wall frames means builders need to come in for four weeks between the rough-in of wiring and the final fit-out—which then means the electrician cannot take on a big job somewhere else. The electrician needs to factor in the 'opportunity cost' of doing a renovation job when he could be taking on the electrical contract for the eight new townhouses being built down the road.

That's why subcontractors' fixed quotes vary so vastly—the job is worth more to some subcontractors. Moreover, just supplying a quote is a time-consuming cost to subcontractors. They are paying for their own travel time, looking at the job and making follow-up phone calls without any guarantee of getting the work—a small subcontractor is better off spending time working hours they can charge to a client than chasing small jobs.

Subcontractors also know that renovators have a hideous habit of changing their minds about the job as it goes along—they decide a new ceiling MUST be put in before the new light fittings are installed. These variations all cost money and time.

Take the example of a renovator who is having a new bathroom installed but changes his mind about the vanity unit and wants something more stylish. This means the builder must:

- Telephone five suppliers to find the more stylish vanity unit that can be delivered within the next five days, costing the builder at least one hour in phone calls.
- Pay a $300 deposit on the vanity to the supplier: an apprentice is sent out with the money, costing two hours in travel time.
- Install the more stylish vanity, which has a European mounting system, which takes the builder an extra two hours.

Why don't tradespeople turn up?

We've all heard stories about people calling subcontractors for quotes, and none of them even show up. 'What!? Don't they need to work?' outraged renovators cry. 'How unprofessional!' others claim.

Well, why the hell should subcontractors use unpaid hours to quote for jobs they know are a waste of time for them? The building and subcontracting industry is more accessible to renovators if renovators ask the right questions over the phone when they enquire about getting a quote. You should:

- Outline the specific job you need quoting—don't just tell the electrician a vague story about wanting some power points moved, tell them how many, how many rooms and the type of construction of your property. That way the electrician can start to understand how much the job might be worth to him before he wastes unpaid time going to your property to quote.
- Ask the subcontractor what type of work they specialise in. If they say 'commercial' straight away, then you will know that as a renovator it is not worth the subcontractor's time to quote on your small residential job.
- Ask the subcontractor if they think the job is easy or not—this will give you an idea of whether other subcontractors will touch it. Sometimes you have to pay a lot of money for one small job to make it worthwhile for the tradesperson; otherwise you might choose to wait until you need a lot of work done at once. Above all, be direct but respectful. Ask the subcontractor if they would be interested in quoting on your job, and simply move on if they decline.

The variation on the vanity unit has cost the builder an extra five hours. If the builder is offering a fixed quote for his service, that is five hours he has to absorb in the name of enhancing the client relationship and offering good customer service. Equally, the builder can refuse to allow the variation which would upset the client and lead to animosity in the relationship.

THE BENEFITS OF TRUST

Establishing a strong rapport and relationship with a subcontractor can take several weeks of day-to-day interaction. Sometimes the rapport does not come until you have used the same subcontractor three or four times. Big developers and project builders get the most cost-efficient access to subcontractors because of their ongoing relationship and rapport.

Once the rapport is established, then 'do-and-charge' can be a cheaper option. That means you—the client—orders, pays for and delivers all materials onsite. The subcontractor just bills an hourly rate for their time. You might ask the subcontractor for an estimate of the time to be spent on the job, and if you have built up enough trust then you will get the job done more cheaply.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A BUILDER AND A TRADESPERSON?

Builders can oversee entire renovations while tradespeople specialise in one particular aspect of building and renovating (for example, electricians look after wiring and carpet layers look after laying carpet). Anyone who calls themselves a builder is required to be certified and take out insurance.

Oddly enough, some builders don't actually build anything. In Australia, some builders are so good at their job that all they do is project-manage and oversee tradespeople rather than get out the hammer and nails themselves. A builder is one level above a tradesperson and should hold a licence to prove they can:

- build properly
- quote for jobs accurately

- program tradespeople
- buy materials and make sure they are delivered on time
- make sure a building site is safe
- oversee occupational health and safety issues.

Builders are highly skilled and often start as tradespeople before gaining a builder's licence. However, some builders come from an architectural or design background and others have no direct trade experience but are good managers. Whatever their experience, all licensed builders must pass strict tests to hold onto that licence. Moreover, in Australia most states have strict legislation outlining builders' responsibilities.

Finding a builder to work on a job can sometimes be more difficult than finding a needle in a haystack. Word of mouth is a good way to find a tradesperson or builder, but it does have its drawbacks. Different people have different needs for trades and builders—an electrician who did great work rewiring an entire house for your friend might not be the right electrician for an emergency repair on an apartment building.

When hiring a builder or tradesperson, check:

- **Years of experience**—How long have they been working and have they worked in your local area? Do they have experience with the type of renovation you are undertaking—a builder who is good with weatherboard houses might not be as experienced with termite-damaged roof rafters in a brick home, although his licence will allow him to undertake the work.
- **The quote**—Builders should always quote on specified plans. They need to see the design and quantities of materials needed before they can give an accurate price. Builders will commonly over-quote on a job they don't want, to make it worth their while. The cheapest quote can often be given by a builder who doesn't have any ongoing work . . . but they might not be as good as a more expensive builder.
- **Availability**—When can a builder start on your job? Next week, next month or next year? Good tradespeople and builders are booked for several weeks or months and can rarely drop everything to start a new job quickly.

- **References**—Ask if they are willing to let you see any of their past work or if they can offer written or verbal references of abilities.

WRITING A SPECIFICATION OR BRIEF

The worst thing you can do with trades or builders is to give a vague instruction like 'I want to turn my fourth bedroom into a bathroom'—you need to have a detailed brief or specification explaining the type of work to be carried out and the materials you want to use. If you haven't made up your mind yet about the paint colours or tiles you want, then explain that in your specification. Architects and quantity surveyors can be paid (sometimes less than $1000) to write specifications for you and it is often cheaper to engage a professional at this point than to let the builder decide your specifications as you go. Some builders LOVE an unspecified job as it can give them an opportunity to mark up materials, add variations to a contract and bill more hours to the client.

Writing specifications yourself is complex, but industry associations like the Housing Industry Association offer standard specification forms which can be used.

Detailed design plans are also effective and are vital if you are moving doors or windows. An architect or building designer will give you the best-quality plans, but a draftsperson can simply draw up the job to your specification leaving you to do the room planning. Detailed plans are vital to show the builder or tradesperson what you want.

GETTING QUOTES

The initial quote is often an approximate price and can only be given accurately when materials are specified. Quotes should be organised weeks in advance of the job needing to be done—that way you can get the most competitive price or the most suitable person. Insisting that a job has to be done next week makes a builder or tradesperson think that you are prepared to pay a loading for the job because time is important to you.

The real costs of DIY

Doing it yourself can save labour costs, but only if the labour you are supplying is of equal value to the labour you could be hiring. Someone without experience at tackling a job will inevitably take longer and use more materials than someone who is experienced. The other pitfalls of DIY are:

- lack of planning, knowledge or skill
- the financial and lifestyle cost of using your time
- potential for accidents and injury
- ruining the materials and having to start the job all over again
- damaging unrelated parts of the property while doing the DIY task.

WORKING WITH A SUBCONTRACTOR

It helps if you find a builder or tradesperson that you can communicate with. Most subcontractors are professionals and are used to communicating with a broad range of people, although some are better at it than others.

The more preparation, planning and specifications you have put into the work you need to get done, the easier the communication is. That's because you:

- know what you want
- can request what you want
- help the builder or tradesperson to deliver what you want.

'I used a fantastic carpenter to do my entire kitchen. We bought module melamine kitchen carcasses and then he bought timber and created the cupboard doors and benchtops. It was cheaper than using a kitchen company.'

Janice, Melbourne

But take the example of the hell-on-wheels renovator who desired a brick extension at the back of her house. It took six months of visiting the brick yard to select the right brick colour. Then she stood and watched for three days as the bricklayers did their job. Once the building was complete, she insisted on every brick looking as pristine as those in the brick yard. The brick cleaners turned up the high pressure hoses to do the job and ended up washing half of the uncured mortar out of the joints, leaving the renovators with 'perfect looking' bricks but compromised render.

CONTRACTS

You can go contract crazy when embarking on this renovation lark. There are contracts for kitchens, contracts for bathrooms, contracts for this, contracts for that. Some contracts are just verbal (not a good idea!) and some are twenty pages long. You'd have to be a lawyer to decipher this contract caper without going mad.

Generally a contract can be in a standard form (offered by organisations like the Master Builders Association or Department of Fair Trading) or it can be specifically written by yourself, the subcontractor or a solicitor. Design and construct builders often use their own standardised simple building contract. Every state has different laws governing contracts, but generally the front page must state the parties to the contract, the amount of money involved and whether the price can be varied.

It may be best to use standard, approved contracts, especially if you are borrowing from the bank to renovate. The basics that MUST be covered include:

- Who is on the contract (the client and builder or tradesperson)?
- The payment amount and scheduled payment options (legally, builders cannot ask for more than a portion of the entire contract sum as a deposit . . . don't let them take all your money before they've done the job).
- Any documents that make up part of the contract, such as plans, elevations, specifications, evidence of who holds the land title, insurance required.
- The standards of construction, extension of time and warranty or accuracy of the work details.

You can vary contracts to suit your needs, as long as both parties sign and date the alterations (sometimes called variations).

'I hired a reputable kitchen company to do our kitchen but then it took twice as long as the contracted time and there was nothing I could do about it. Once I signed on the dotted line with them, there was no way I could get out of the contract even though they weren't fulfilling their end of the bargain.'

Sarah, Brisbane

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

When you think of all the things that can go wrong, it seems surprising that every renovation doesn't turn out to be some kind of disaster. There are hundreds of elements to any type of renovation and any one of them can come back to bite you on the behind. The most common problem is misunderstandings between subcontractors and clients, especially inexperienced clients like owner-renovators. When things go wrong, it helps to remember the obligations of the client and the subcontractor. The client agrees to:

- give the subcontractor uninterrupted access to the job
- pay progress payments as required in the contract, even if certain things are in dispute
- understand the contract
- request variations only when problems are unforeseen.

The subcontractor agrees to:

- complete the work within a specified time
- carry out satisfactory work
- require progress payments within the law
- comply with all regulatory requests and guidelines.

The best solution to renovation disasters is mediation, and this can often be supplied through state government authorities such as the Department of Fair Trading. Sure, it takes time, but it can solve problems within a few months.

The next big step is legal action. It is best to avoid this—it is time-consuming, costly and stressful, even for the party that wins. Openly communicating with subcontractors and checking that their work complies with building codes and other regulations will usually keep disasters at bay. Most professional subcontractors will not risk their reputation by refusing to rectify faulty works—it's only when clients behave like spoilt brats that they refuse to come back to fix things. Oh, and holding the final payment up your sleeve until you drag the sub-contractor back to fix things usually works—just don't break any of your contracted payment schedules to do it!

Contractual terms to know

Bill of quantities: A detailed list showing the quantities of labour and materials which are needed to carry out the works detailed in the contract. A quantity surveyor usually does this from working drawings and specifications, and it allows all builders to tender a uniform bid for the job.

Certificate of Practical Completion: A certificate issued by the council or certifying authority to show that works under the contract have been completed except for minor defects which shouldn't inhibit the use of the works.

Contingency sum: Amount of money included in the contract to cover unforeseen items.

Contract documents: All the documents which make up a particular written contract—often includes the names and details of both parties, working drawings and specifications, bill of quantities, terms of payment and other such details.

Defects liability period: A specified period of time within which the subcontractor has to rectify any faults at his or her own cost. The period usually commences from the date that the Certificate of Practical Completion is issued.

Final Certificate: A certificate issued by the council or certifying authority when all work has been done, all defects remedied and all obligations under the contract have been fulfilled.

Final completion: The stage when all work under the contract has been satisfactorily completed and the contractor signs a release from all claims. The security deposit can then be returned if necessary.
Handover: The formal handing over of the site back to the owner.
Lien: The right of a contractor to hold property of another party to the contract to secure payment—a good clause to stay away from!
Liquidated damages: Compensation paid by the contractor for losses when works are not completed within an agreed time period. A sum stated in the contract is paid for every week that goes over the contract time until the works have been brought to practical completion.
Lump sum contract: A contract engaging a subcontractor to perform the work for a fixed price.
Practical completion: The stage in the building process when the contracted works are finished except for minor defects which will not inhibit the use of the works.
Prime cost: An amount included in the contract documents to cover the purchases of items such as bathroom fittings. Usually, these are over and above the quoted price.
Provisional sum: An amount to cover works proposed as part of the contract, but for which full information cannot be made available prior to calling tenders.
Retention of monies: A specified percentage of the building cost retained by the property owner as limited security to make sure all obligations are fulfilled. Normally, one half of the retention monies is released to the contractor at practical completion and the other half upon issue of the Final Certificate.
Variation: An addition to or alteration to work under a contract—it usually costs more money.

TYPES OF TRADESPEOPLE AND WHAT THEY DO

- **Design and construct builders**—Licensed to oversee the entire renovation or building process from planning and design through to specification and construction. They are great for time-poor renovators who want to hand over the process to experts.

- **Design and construct kitchen/bathroom companies**—Like builders, but often specialising in just kitchens or bathrooms. Kitchen companies offer 'free' design and will tailor a product to your needs, then organise installation and trades. Bathroom companies often do deals with tile distributors and plumbing outlets to keep costs down. They hold your hand through the entire process and work on the job until completion.
- **Project-home builder**—Highly efficient builders who program and specify their designs so well they can be cheaper than anyone else. They will often hold your hand through the design, approval and construction process. You can be charged for varying the plans and for site costs such as demolition and excavation.
- **Manufacturer's installers**—Some manufacturers of building materials, such as doors, windows, skylights and even pergola kits, noiseproofing and the like, also have teams of installers who subcontract their services—this is known as 'supply and fit'. These installers can be good to use if the material is non-standard and requires fast installation. Often, builders or regular tradespeople can install these products if you have purchased them on a supply-only basis.
- **Carpet layer**—Installs carpets and floorcoverings such as vinyl or even timber floors. Sometimes carpet layers have contracts to work with suppliers and retailers, which means most carpet shops will have and recommend a layer.
- **Cabinet maker or joiner**—Custom makes built-in storage and cabinets for kitchens, bedrooms, living areas etc. Often, renovators use ready-made carcasses to save money.
- **Carpenter**—Constructs timber frames, hangs doors, installs windows, fixes timber staircases, lays timber floors and repairs termite-damaged timbers.

> *'I rang a carpenter to get a quote for laying my carpets. I truly had no idea that a carpenter had nothing to do with floorcoverings. It's no wonder he didn't turn up.'*
>
> Ed, Sydney

- **Demolition/dust removalist**—Removes old structures to make way for new buildings or renovations. There are also specialist asbestos or lead-dust

removalists who charge more money for safely disposing of these hazardous building materials.

- **Electrician**—Wires and rewires buildings, repairs and installs light fittings, power points, safety switches, exhaust and ceiling fans and telephone and digital cables.
- **Plumber**—Unclogs pipes, fixes toilets or leaking pipes, detects plumbing problems and may be experienced at gasfitting and drainage as well. Plumbers also lay out drainage and plumbing at pre-building stages.
- **Roofer**—Repairs and installs roofs, flashings and gutters. A roof plumber is usually highly skilled at understanding stormwater drainage from roofs and can fix roof valleys and gutters.
- **Tiler**—Installs floor tiles or wall tiles, but there are also specialist tilers, such as those who work with mosaics. Some tilers do waterproofing as well.
- **Landscaper**—A structural landscaper can construct retaining walls, decks, pergolas, paving, paths and driveways. Some landscapers only offer garden maintenance (such as mowing) or light construction (such as paving a path).
- **Airconditioning installer**—Licensed to install ducted, split system and individual airconditioners.
- **Gasfitter**—Often plumbers as well, gasfitters are experienced at installing gas heating, hot water and other plumbing needs.
- **Fencer**—Installs timber, galvanised steel, Colorbond or any other style of fence. Sometimes they subcontract to landscapers as well as the general public, or they may specialise in a particular type of fencing (like rural or pool).
- **Chimney sweep**—Specialises in cleaning fireplaces and chimneys, as well as installing and repairing old fireplaces.
- **Glazier**—Installs glass into frames such as windows or shower screens. Glaziers sometimes offer additional services, such as decorative glass or security film installed over glass.
- **Bricklayer**—Often subcontracted to builders, these tradespeople lay bricks but can also build houses, walls, fences and garden features.
- **Excavator**—Uses heavy earth-moving equipment to prepare uneven sites and make them suitable to build on.
- **Concretor**—Lays concrete slabs for houses, makes paths or driveways, prepares road surfaces.

- **Gyprock plasterer**—Creates internal walls and ceilings by lining timber frames with gyprock.
- **Solid plasterer**—Creates the smooth, solid plaster walls used in older-style houses.
- **Cement renderer**—Uses cement to render brick walls, sometimes for decorative reasons.
- **Rubbish removalist**—Quickly demolish or strip-out a property and ensure that the removed material is recycled or disposed of correctly. You can do some of this yourself, but a professional will leave the site prepared for the builder to begin work immediately.

13

sarah and tim renovate a unit

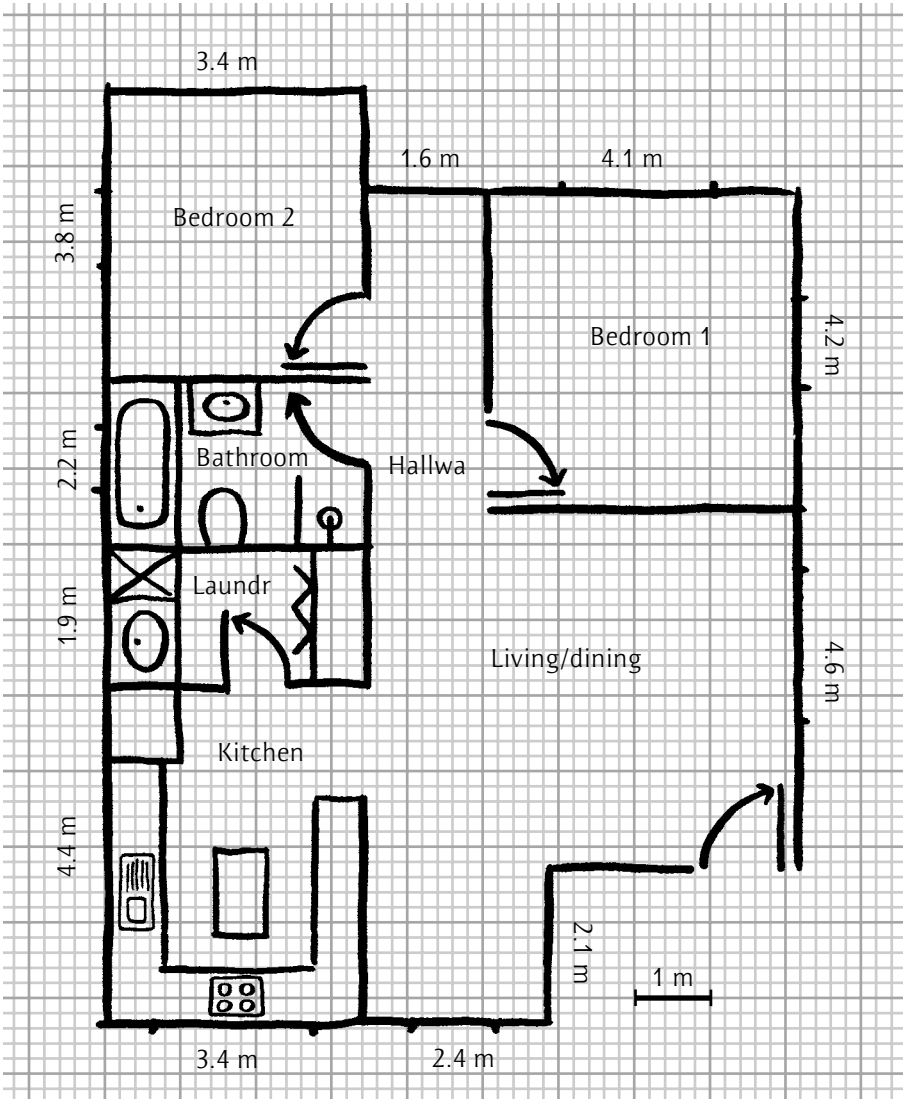
Sarah and Tim saved hard for three years to buy a 1960s double-brick unit in a beachside suburb in Sydney. The kitchen had been renovated in the 1980s and was lime green with pine-look laminate cupboards—it was ugly, but they could live with it. The bathroom was another story, with tiles falling off the shower recess and bubbling paint on the other side of the wall. They didn't know exactly what was wrong with the wall, but their building inspector told them it needed fixing and would cost around $2000. Sarah and Tim loathed the carpet, which was an ugly berber loop and had tracks of dirt and cigarette burns throughout. Sarah is a nurse who works shifts and Tim is a busy IT support professional averaging 50–60 hours work each week. They know they need to renovate their unit, but where do they start?

STARTING AT THE BEGINNING

Sarah had immediately set her heart on replacing the carpet and had already priced a beautiful pure wool cut-pile loop at $3000, but Tim thought they needed to be more careful with their money. Why should they replace the carpet when the ceilings needed repainting and paint would probably drip onto the carpet? The couple squabbled over which items needed fixing first, but once they drew up a floorplan they could see their property as a whole and work out where to start.

Diagram 13-1

Sarah and Tim's apartment floorplan



L-shaped living and dining 5.7 m x 4.6 m
plus 2.1 m x 2.4 m = 26.22 + 5.04 = 31.26 sq m
Bedroom 1 4.1 m x 4.2 m = 17.22 sq m
Bedroom 2 3.4 m x 3.8 m = 12.92 sq m

Kitchen 4.4 m x 3.4 m = 14.96 sq m
Bathroom 2.2 m x 3.4 m = 7.48 sq m
Laundry 1.9 m x 3.4 m = 6.46 sq m
Hallway 1.6 m x 4.2 m = 6.72 sq m
TOTAL: 97.02 sq m

Table 13-1
Sarah and Tim's initial wishlist

Room	What needs doing	Guesstimated cost	Priority	Guesstimated time
Hallway, lounge/dining, bedrooms	Replace carpets	$2000	High	Sarah spent 4 hours shopping and getting prices; she can spend 4 or more hours overseeing installation.
Kitchen	New kitchen cabinets	$8000	Low	We can spend 8 hours on weekends shopping and getting prices; Sarah can spend 20 hours or more overseeing installation.
Bathroom	Repair bathroom wall	$2500	High	Sarah can spend 4 or more hours organising a trades-person or builder to fix it.
Bathroom	New tiles and shower screen in bathroom	$3500	High	Tim can shop for tiles in his lunch hour and we will spend 2 hours shopping for fittings on a weekend. Sarah can spend 8 hours or more over-seeing the installation.
Main bedroom	Built-in wardrobes	$3000	Low	We are not prepared to spend a lot of time on this as it is a low priority.
Lounge/dining	Paint living area	$1000	High	Tim will buy the paint and do the painting over 2 weekends, spending at least 14 hours each weekend.
TOTAL COST: $20 000 TOTAL TIME: About 8 days				

Table 13-2

Sarah and Tim weigh up the costs of renovating

Purchase price/current value estimate of property	$340 000
Stamp duty, taxes, legal fees	$12 000
Purchase price needed for resale (add agent's commission)	$352 000 + $7040 (2% agent's commission) = $359 040
Current range of market prices in local area (always compare in same street)	$332 000 to $426 000
Totem-pole pricing—lower, mid or upper	Lower
Reason for totem-pole pricing—position, location, potential etc.	Vintage of unit makes it less appealing than new units; the size is okay, but there are no beach views
Guesstimated renovation cost	$20 000 to $23 500
Proposed time cost	More than 90 hours
Proposed chaos quotient	It will be stressful for Sarah to organise the renovation on top of her work. We also plan to have relatives from England stay with us in the next three months, which will impinge on our time.
Will the renovation change the position on the totem pole?	No, it is unlikely that the renovation will take our unit to the mid-range, which is currently $380 000.
Estimated land value of property	The unit really is 'at value' as one of eight units on a large block of beachside land (making the land worth about $2.4 million).
Estimated value of improvements to property	Because of the unit's age, it has done most of its depreciating. Modernising and improving the unit should add some value, as the planned renovations will fix issues which would be considered defects by any potential purchaser. Failing to modernise the unit may mean the price depreciates even further as it becomes more outdated.

SARAH AND TIM WEIGH UP THE INITIAL BUDGET

After weighing up the costs, Tim and Sarah realise that they have to be careful not to spend too much money renovating their unit, as it is unlikely they will ever have a top-of-the-market unit. They should focus their renovations on improving the current defects of the unit and making the place more comfortable for them to come home to. They have almost 30 per cent equity in their property, with a mortgage of $240 000. The couple plan to pay for the renovations out of their salaries (they budget to have around $1200 'spare' each month) but are prepared to draw down about $12 000 from the mortgage if they need to.

Now that they have made some time guesstimates, Sarah is concerned about the extra stress of renovating while they entertain visitors from overseas. They are also worried about the money—and they haven't even started spending yet. The couple also realises that making some structural changes to the unit would require the permission of the body corporate (also called an owners corporation) so they decide to focus on repairs, maintenance and refurbishments which don't require formal approvals.

Sarah and Tim want to check if they are really spending their renovation budget wisely, so they use the 'Time versus budget planner' (Table 4-1). They work out how many hours, on average, they are home each week and the percentage of time spent in each room. They plan to spend at least $20 000 on improving their unit. Here's how they used the planner:

Rebuilding strata-titled units

It is much easier to renovate a unit without rebuilding. Changing the walls, doors or windows of a unit technically means you wish to alter parts of the structure which you do not own. Moreover, moving internal structural walls means you may have to prove the renovation will not affect the common property or any other unit owner—and that often means extensive engineering reports. It is always good manners to inform your neighbours of any renovations, and many owners' corporations have rules outlining the permissions for renovations and the access tradespeople can have to the common property.

Table 13-3
Sarah and Tim's time versus budget planner

Room	Average hours per week spent in room	% time at home spent in room	Renovation goal	Budget allocated	% budget (room budget divided by total budget multiplied by 100)
Living area (lounge/dining/ hallway)	20 in living area	20%	Paint, carpet	$3500	33%
Kitchen	7	7%	New cabinets	$8000	40%
Bedroom	70	70%	Built-in wardrobes	$3000	15%
Bathroom	3	3%	Repair flaky wall, new shower screen and tiles	$5500–$7500	12%

Tim and Sarah have guesstimated they will spend $20 000 to $23 500 and more than 90 hours of their own time on their renovation. After completing the planner, they realise their budget is not allocated well. They are planning to spend 40 per cent of their budget on the kitchen, and while this is an expensive room to renovate, they only spend 7 per cent of their time in this room and they don't do a lot of cooking; they spend the majority of their time in the living area and bedroom. Sarah and Tim need to think long and hard about how they use their rooms and whether their budget is being spent to its best potential. Room-by-room mission statements will help them to prioritise their money and their time to make sure they renovate to their needs, not their whims.

Table 13-4

Sarah and Tim's room-by-room mission statements

LOUNGE ROOM	
What activities are undertaken in this room?	We use this room for the bulk of day-to-day living. We watch TV, listen to music, read newspapers, talk on the telephone and entertain guests in this room.
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?	At least 3.
Does it have enough natural light?	Yes, there is a window facing north-east.
Are the doorways in the right places?	Yes.
Are the windows in the right places?	Yes.
Are the floorcoverings what we want?	No, the carpet is worn out and hideous.
Are the window treatments what we want?	We need something that offers privacy at night.
Does our furniture fit or does the room need more furniture?	We have enough furniture for this room—but Tim's chrome lamp clutters up the space, so we can ditch it.
Would it benefit from built-in storage or furniture?	Yes, better storage to tidy up the TV and stereo system would probably give us more living space.
Are there adequate power points for the equipment used in the room?	There are only 2—it would be nice to have at least 6 rather than a tangle of power boards.
Is there adequate heating or cooling?	The room gets really hot in summer, and we have to drag out the floor fan and open the windows to cool it down. In winter, we use an electric heater.
Would this work better as an open-plan room?	It is open plan.

THE LIVING AREA RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: We like to use the lounge/dining room for relaxing and entertaining guests and it is used for at least 20 hours each week, so the fittings and fixtures need to be mid quality. We want it to be a relaxing place to unwind. This is the room that gets used most, so we are prepared to spend up to 40% of our budget on this room.

MAIN BEDROOM

What activities are undertaken in this room?	*Sleeping and sleeping in! Getting dressed. Reading at night.*
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?	*Asleep for 9–10 hours per night.*
Does it have enough natural light?	*Not really, but we can use lamps to overcome it.*
Are the doorways in the right places?	*Yes.*
Are the windows in the right places?	*The easterly sun can shine in our eyes in the morning—maybe we need to think about putting in block-out blinds?*
Are the floorcoverings what we want?	*No, the carpet needs replacing.*
Are the window treatments what we want?	*Curtains and block-out blinds would be ideal in here—can we afford it?*
Does our furniture fit or does the room need more furniture?	*Yes, our furniture fits.*
Would it benefit from built-in storage or furniture?	*We could do with better storage for all our clothes and would love built-in wardrobes.*
Are there adequate power points for the equipment used in the room?	*Yes.*
Is there adequate heating or cooling?	*Airconditioning would be ideal in summer, but it's not necessary.*

THE MAIN BEDROOM RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: *We like to use our bedroom to sleep and get dressed in and we spend around 70 hours each week in it, but for most of that time we are asleep. We would like the fittings and fixtures to be basic quality as our priority is for the bedroom to be functional. We are prepared to spend 40% of our budget on this room.*

KITCHEN	
What activities are undertaken in this room?	Cooking, eating breakfast.
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?	Maybe 1 hour.
Does it have enough natural light?	Yes, it has a westerly window so the afternoon sun is bright.
Are the doorways in the right places?	It would be nicer to open it up to the living area, but given that we don't spend much time in the kitchen it is probably not worth the cost.
Are the windows in the right places?	Not really.
Are the floorcoverings what we want?	No—the tiles are UGLY.
Are the window treatments what we want?	We would probably be better off with a reflective blind to keep out the harsh western sun during summer.
Are there enough cabinets for storage?	Yes—it's the lime-green that's hideous.
Is there enough bench space?	Yes, although more is always nice.
Are there adequate power points for the equipment used in the room?	Yes.
Is there adequate heating or cooling?	Yes.

THE KITCHEN RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: We like to use our kitchen to prepare basic meals so the fittings and fixtures need to be of basic quality. We would like the kitchen to be functional, as we only spend around 7 or 8 hours each week in it. We do not think it is worth spending 40% of our renovation budget on this room—let's look at ways to spend a more appropriate amount of $2000 to $3000. We think 10 to 20% of our budget should be spent on this room.

BATHROOM

What activities are undertaken in this room?	*Showering, toileting and grooming; Sarah does her hair and make-up; Tim shaves. Once a month Sarah might have a long bath.*
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?	*For around 30 minutes to 1 hour.*
Does it have enough natural light?	*Yes.*
Are the doorways in the right places?	*Yes.*
Are the windows in the right places?	*Yes.*
Are the floorcoverings what we want?	*No, the floor tiles are yuk.*
Are the window treatments what we want?	*There are none.*
Is the bathtub the right size for our requirements?	*Yes.*
Is the lighting good enough?	*Maybe we could put a light near the vanity unit to make it easier to shave and do make-up.*
Is the shower recess safe and accessible?	*Yes.*
Does the vanity have enough storage?	*Yes.*
Do we need double basins or just one?	*One.*
Do we need a separate toilet?	*No.*
Are there adequate power points for the equipment used in the room?	*Yes.*
Is there adequate heating or cooling?	*Yes.*

THE BATHROOM RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: *We like to use our bathroom to bathe, brush teeth, do hair and make-up, and it is used for 7 or 8 hours each week, so the fittings and fixtures need to be basic quality. We would like the bathroom to be functional and we want to fix the room's defects. We cannot justify spending a lot of money on it. We think 10% of our budget should be allocated to this room.*

SARAH AND TIM REVISE THEIR WISHLIST

After re-thinking how they are going to spend their money, Sarah and Tim realise that simple repairs and maintenance and basic refurbishment should reduce their kitchen renovation costs, as well as minimise their bathroom costs. Sarah has started a desire file, and has decided that spending money to decorate and furnish their living area—where they spend most of their home time—will be a better use of their money than a full kitchen renovation.

Sarah and Tim devised maintenance planners to help them reach their renovation goals. Sarah also wanted to draw up a schedule of regular maintenance, but Tim refused to comply! Instead they went straight to refurbishment planners so they could finalise their renovation details and start a task list.

Table 13-5
Sarah and Tim's bathroom maintenance planner

Bathroom	Gentle clean	Hard scrub	DIY repairs
Floor	Yes	No	
Walls	Yes	No	Painting the walls white will make the space seem bigger.
Bathtub	No	Yes	Buy some enamel paint to fix up large scratch on surface.
Toilet	Yes	No	
Vanity	Yes	No	Buy some new handles for the doors to modernise it.
Taps	Yes	No	
Wall cabinet	Yes	No	
Light fittings	No	No	Let's buy a new light fitting for the vanity unit.

Table 13-6
Sarah and Tim's kitchen maintenance planner

Kitchen	Gentle clean	Hard scrub	DIY repairs
Cupboard doors	Yes	No	Let's look at laminate paints to paint over the pine-look doors.
Cupboard carcasses	Yes	No	
Benchtops	Yes	No	The lime-green is fairly hideous. Sarah has seen a decorating story in a magazine about tiling over the bench and thinks they could tackle it as a DIY job.
Splashback	Yes	No	Resilicone behind the kitchen sink where it is mouldy.
Taps	Yes	No	
Doorknobs	No	No	Sarah wants to replace these with modern chrome knobs to update the look of the kitchen cupboards.
Stove	No	Yes	We need a new element for the stove and will buy some enamel paint to cover up a chip in the back corner.
Oven	No	Yes	New light globe needed in the oven; special order to oven company required.
Light fittings	Yes	No	
Flooring	No	Yes, need to remove scuff marks	
Refrigerator	Yes	No	
Kickboards	Yes	No	These will need painting to match the repainted cupboards.
Rangehood	Yes	Yes, wash filters in the dishwasher	

Table 13-7
Sarah and Tim's bathroom refurbishment planner

Bathroom	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Floor	No			
Walls	Yes	Paint $85 Brushes $15 Clean-up materials $10	Do it yourself	Two 4-hour sessions
Repairing water-damaged wall	Yes, rebuild	$2000	One day to get a professional builder in	
Bathtub	Yes	Small tub of paint $16	Do it yourself	1 hour
Vanity	Yes	New handles and screws $12	Do it yourself	30 minutes
Light fittings	Yes	New light fitting $35 Electrician $80–150	Electrician needed, 2 hours	2 hours to get quotes and organise installation
TOTAL COST: $2253 to $2323 TOTAL TIME: 11 hours and 30 minutes				

Table 13-8
Sarah and Tim's kitchen refurbishment planner

Kitchen	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Cupboard doors	Yes	Paint $30 Brushes and clean-up $20	Do it yourself	8 hours
Cupboard carcasses	No			
Benchtops	Yes	Tiles $150 Grout and tile adhesive $30 Tile cutter hire for one day $65 Tools $30 Wooden trim $15	Do it yourself	16 hours
Splashback	Yes	Silicone $7	Do it yourself	30 minutes
Kickboards	No			
Stove	Yes	New element $32 Small tub of enamel $16	Do it yourself	1 hour
Oven	Yes	New globe $28	Do it yourself	5 minutes
TOTAL COST: $423 TOTAL TIME: 25 hours, 35 minutes				

Table 13-9

Sarah and Tim's living area and main bedroom refurbishment planner

Living area and main bedroom	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Floor	Yes	Supply and install $2000	Carpet layer needed, half a day	4 hours to select carpet and organise laying
Walls	Yes	Paint $320 Brushes $30 Drop sheets and clean up $100	Do it yourself	Four 7-hour days
Skirtings, windows, architraves/ door frames	Yes	Include in costs for walls	Do it yourself	Included in walls
Soft furnishings	Yes	New rugs, sofas and paintings $2000	Do it yourself	8–16 hours of shopping to choose
Storage	No			

TOTAL COST: $4450

TOTAL TIME: 40–48 hours

TOTAL RENOVATION GUESSTIMATE: $5126, which is less than 25 per cent of the original planned budget of $20 000.

Table 13-10

Sarah and Tim's renovation planner 2: From guesstimate to final budget

Task	Guesstimate	Estimate quotes	Final cost	Own time estimate/final
Replace carpets	$2000	Quotes ranged from $2400 for acrylic to $3800 for imported wool. All quotes included removing old carpet, underlay and laying of new carpet		Time blew out from estimated 4 hours to 8 hours
Paint living area, bedroom, hallway, bathroom	Materials $450		Paint needed is bought on special for $250, so professional quality rollers and brushes are bought as well	Two full weekends are allocated—one weekend for the living area and one for the bedroom, hallway and bathroom
Repair water-damaged bathroom wall	$2000	Builder quotes $2430, solid plasterer quotes $1840 and handyman quotes $880		Estimate 6 hours to get quotes and organise jobs
Paint kitchen cupboards with laminate paint	Paint $30 Brushes and clean-up $20	—	—	8 hours
New handles for bathroom vanity and kitchen cupboards	New handles and screws $12		Tim wants the more expensive handles so the cost goes up to $48 for vanity; $120 for kitchen cupboard knobs	About 30 minutes to install kitchen knobs and 10 minutes to install vanity knobs, but 1 hour shopping for them

Task	Guesstimate	Estimate quotes	Final cost	Own time estimate/final
Tile kitchen benchtop	Tiles $150 Grout and tile adhesive $30 Tile cutter hire for one day $65 Tools $30 Wooden trim $15	The tiling is a disaster and we end up hiring a handyman to repair the botch job. We cannot use our kitchen bench for a week and the cost blows out to $850.		We spend more than 14 hours trying to tile the bench and then another 2 hours organising to have it fixed—16 hours
New lighting in the bathroom over the vanity	$115–185	Quotes ranged from about $150 to $340; electrician chosen quoted $55 per hour for a 2-hour job. We estimate 3 hours ($165) plus $45 for materials–$210.		Time arranging quotes blew out to more than 3 hours
New soft furnishings and decorations for the living area	As Sarah shops, she has a new wish list and the estimate increases to $2000		Sofa $1490 TV storage $1200 Artwork $420 Rug $650 The final cost is up to $3760, but since this is what we really want, it's worth it	Time shopping blew out to five 4-hour Saturday shopping sessions—20 hours

GENERAL APPROACH TO RENOVATIONS: As we want to pay as we go, we plan to renovate slowly over the next six months. We intend to work on one room at a time once we get a more detailed renovation plan.
TOTAL TIME: More than 91 hours. GUESSTIMATED TIME: More than 40 hours
TOTAL COST: $9348 GUESSTIMATED COST: $20 000

Tim and Sarah have shaved off more than half their original renovation budget, but they have dedicated more than twice the time to do it. In renovation, it can be hard to cut costs without adding more time to the equation—the more quickly something needs to be done, the more expensive it can be because you have to pay for other people's labour.

HIRING PROFESSIONALS

Sarah and Tim know there are risks involved with hiring subcontractors, especially with their own limited knowledge of the building and renovation industry.

Electrician

- **Brief:** Install the slimline fluoro light fitting to a spot just under the bathroom mirror to improve bathroom lighting. The light switch is to be connected to the main light switch, so that the ceiling light and extra mirror lighting go on at the same time.
- **Getting quotes:** Sarah and Tim did not go with the cheapest quote because they liked the electrician who offered to do their small job as a 'do-and-charge' job. They thought he was the most honest tradesperson and they felt able to communicate with him so any extra cost blow-out would be worth risking. All electricians quoted on the job to the brief outlined above. Sarah and Tim didn't like the electrician who offered the cheapest quote, as he mocked them for writing out a brief and if the job had gone wrong or they had to ask some questions, they thought he would be too arrogant to deal with.
- **Doing the job:** Sarah and Tim's chosen electrician turned up 15 minutes later than he said he would. He charged them for two and a half hours, as making the new light switch combine with the main light took a bit more time than planned.

Repairing the bathroom wall

- **Brief:** All tiles in shower recess need to be removed carefully, as they need to be re-used. The wall needs to have the water-damaged render scraped out on

both sides of the wall and new salt-suppressant render should replace it. The bathroom shower will then need a new waterproof membrane, with all cracks and joints carefully looked at. The old tiles should be replaced and regrouted. The job needs to be done in as little time as possible, as they have no additional shower to use while the job is being done.

- **Getting quotes:** Sarah organised the quotes and found it very difficult to choose between them. All of the tradespeople offered different advice for repairing the wall—one said she would be better off installing a new shower cabinet with its own tray, another said retiling the shower rather than re-using the existing tiles was their best option. Getting quotes made the process more confusing. The couple chose the cheapest quote because they didn't think they should pay so much more money to repair something that didn't add a lot of design value to their apartment. They also liked the handyman and felt that starting a relationship with him meant they could use him on other jobs if needed.
- **Doing the job:** The handyman broke three tiles when removing the tiles, and it took Sarah eight days to track down three matching tiles to replace them. That meant the shower was out of service for more than a week and Sarah and Tim were forced to have baths instead.

Carpet laying

- **Brief:** Sarah has already chosen the carpet she wants because it seemed the cheapest price for the best quality. They are less concerned about the underlay, as that will be unseen. They want the carpet laid in the bedroom, hallway and lounge/dining rooms and the old carpet removed.
- **Getting quotes:** The carpet chosen was only available from one supplier, but the couple did look at two other quotes for different carpets. They learnt that the quality of the underlay was important—the better quality underlays can make carpets last longer and inhibit mould and dust.
- **Doing the job:** The carpet laying took only half a day—but moving all the furniture from the living and dining rooms and main bedroom to be stored in the spare bedroom and bathroom took Sarah and Tim a day. The carpet laying went without a hitch, but Sarah wished she had specified chrome-coloured trims at the doorways instead of the gold-coloured trims that were laid.

Kitchen bench tiling mishap

- **Brief:** There wasn't one! Sarah and Tim got so sick of attempting to tile the bench that they called the handyman who had repaired their bathroom wall and asked him to fix it. The kitchen bench could not be used until it was repaired, so it meant more time living in chaos than they had planned.
- **Getting quotes:** There was no time for quotes.
- **Doing the job:** The handyman cost them $850—almost as much as they paid to repair the water-damaged wall—but the bench took less than one day to fix. Sarah and Tim assumed the materials might have been more expensive for the bench than the shower—they couldn't tell if they were being overcharged because they didn't really understand the job's requirements.

SARAH AND TIM'S RENOVATION SCHEDULE

Sarah and Tim found that trying to program and organise the timing of the jobs involved in renovating was one of the most difficult parts—and a source of conflict. They each had different priorities: Sarah wanted the carpets and painting done first so the unit would immediately look better while Tim wanted to make sure the jobs were planned so that they didn't ruin the new carpet. Ultimately, they decided on a room-by-room approach. They devised a list of tasks for each weekend—but were also flexible with their schedule.

SARAH AND TIM'S RENOVATION: A SUMMARY

The couple bought a unit they knew needed some renovation. They had a budget of $20 000 to $25 000 based on what they thought they would need to spend. With planning and some careful thought about how they like to live and the amount of time they spend in certain rooms, they restructured the budget to spend just under $10 000 and do more maintenance and repair tasks themselves. Sure, they spent more than 90 hours of their own time on it, but they felt it was worth it to save money and upgrade their living areas. With the money they have saved, they can upgrade the kitchen or bathroom later if they wish.

Table 13-11
Sarah and Tim's time scheduler for renovation

Task	Week 1	W/end 1		Week 2	W/end 2		Week 3	W/end 3		Week 4
		Sat	Sun		Sat	Sun		Sat	Sun	
Bathroom										
New lighting in the bathroom over the vanity	*			☐						
Repair water-damaged bathroom wall	☐									
Paint bathroom										
New handles for vanity										
Cleaning and maintenance			✕							
Living area/and bedroom										
Replace carpets		*			*		☐			
Shopping for furniture/ decorations		*			*			*		
Paint rooms		✕	✕		✕	✕				
Kitchen										
Paint cupboard doors etc.								✕		
New cupboard door knobs									✕	
Cleaning and maintenance	✕								✕	
Tile benchtop										

☐ Professional tradesperson organised
✕ Sarah and Tim DIY
* Shopping and organising tradespeople

W/end 4		Week 5	W/end 5		Week 6	W/end 6		Week 7	W/end 7		Week 8	W/end 8	
Sat	Sun		Sat	Sun		Sat	Sun		Sat	Sun		Sat	Sun
×	× ×												
*		*			*			*			*		
			×	×	*	□							

14

tom and belinda renovate a brick-veneer house

Tom and Belinda have two young children and have bought a three-bedroom house in an outer suburb of Brisbane. The house was built in the 1970s and it looks a little tired, but it is a freestanding brick-veneer with a tile roof on a level block of land and the family is happy to be in their own home.

The house, which they bought for $320 000, has some structural problems—a building inspector has advised Tom and Belinda to rebuild the main bathroom as it is leaking water into the timber framing of the house. Belinda would like a more functional kitchen that connects to the living area, so she can supervise the children while she is preparing meals.

The couple is prepared to spend $20 000 on improving their property. They plan to live in the house for at least ten years so they would like it to be a comfortable for them. However, Tom works 50–60 hours each week and Belinda looks after their children, so they are extremely time-poor and do not want to do work on the house themselves. 'When Tom gets home from work, we're lucky if we have an hour together to talk about our days and the children,' says Belinda. 'For us, time is the most important thing. We don't want to do any DIY.'

STARTING AT THE BEGINNING

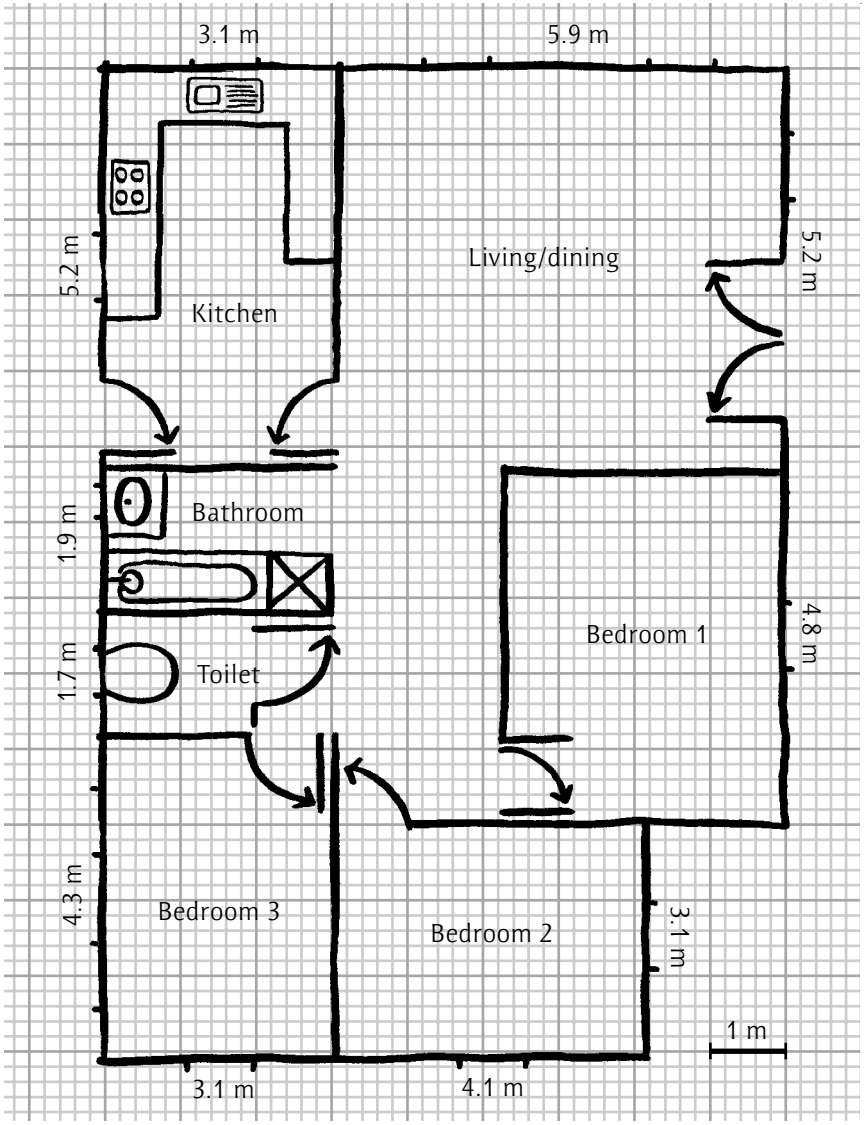
Tom and Belinda can see the value of planning how to spend their $20 000 renovation budget, but they can't dedicate much of their own time to working on their property. They began by drawing up the floorplan, which takes less than a hour. The couple then spent two hours going from room to room, writing a list of what they would like to achieve. Tom and Belinda decided to refine their wishlist to concentrate on high priorities.

Table 14-1
Tom and Belinda's initial wishlist

Room	What needs doing	Guesstimated cost	Priority	Guesstimated time
Kitchen	Modernise the kitchen	$5000	High	As little as possible—an hour or two.
Lounge/dining	Remove wall between the living/dining and kitchen, and create a breakfast bar	$4000	High	Not much; get a builder to do everything
Bathroom	Fix leaking bathroom and replace fittings and tiles to modernise	$10 000	High	Not much; get a builder to do everything
TOTAL COST: $19 000 TOTAL TIME: As little as possible, but prepared to dedicate at least 8 hours to overseeing the process				

Diagram 14-1

Tom and Belinda's house floorplan



Living/dining 5.9 m x 5.2 m = 30.68 sq m
Bedroom 1 4.8 m x 3.7 m = 17.76 sq m
Bedroom 2 4.1 m x 3.1 m = 12.71 sq m
Bedroom 3 3.1 m x 4.3 m = 13.33 sq m
Bathroom 1.9 m x 3.1 m = 5.89 sq m
Toilet 2.1 m x 1.7 m = 3.57 sq m
Hallway 3.8 x 2.2 m = 8.36 sq m
Kitchen 5.2 m x 3.1 m = 16.12 sq m
TOTAL: 108.42 sq m

WHAT NEXT FOR TOM AND BELINDA?

Because Tom and Belinda have a long-term plan to live in the house for more than ten years and they aren't borrowing more to pay for the renovations, they don't need to analyse the finances of renovating. They are spending less than 10 per cent of the purchase price to upgrade the property and are at low risk of overcapitalising.

However, Tom and Belinda are wary of rebuilding—they don't want to blow out their budget or their time and they don't think it's necessary. The wall between the kitchen and lounge area can be removed as part of the kitchen refurbishment, and apart from repairing the leak, the refurbishment of the bathroom is minimal.

Tom and Belinda know they need to hire someone who can oversee the entire renovation for a price that falls within their budget. They are aware that people like themselves who aren't familiar with builders or renovating can easily get lost in the process, so they are prepared to spend time planning and formulating a specific brief for the builder.

Removing the kitchen wall

When Tom and Belinda look at the kitchen, they realise they could open the top half of the wall between the kitchen and lounge room to create a visual connection between the two rooms. If they are stripping and modernising the kitchen anyway, it shouldn't cost too much more to open the wall and re-gyprock it.

Table 14-2
Tom and Belinda's kitchen refurbishment planner

Kitchen	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Cupboard doors	Yes, the old laminate doors look tatty	14 doors at around $120 each = $1440	Builder to oversee installation, around $200 in labour	Probably 30 minutes for each door, so is a half day job

Kitchen	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Cupboard carcasses	No, they can be re-used			
Benchtops	Yes, we want something durable but more modern	Laminate benchtop with a rolled edge, about 10 linear metres at about $100 per metre = $1000	Builder to oversee installation, around $240–440	Shouldn't be more than half a day to remove the old benchtops and replace with new ones
Splashback	Yes, removing the old benchtop will break some of the old tiles	About 8 sq m of splashback to be tiled, at $75 per square metre = about $750	Tiler about $300 per day, plus 20% for the builder to oversee = $360–720	Probably 1–2 days' work for a tiler.
Taps	Yes	Tap set $179	Builder to install, around $100	1 hour
Oven/stove	Yes	Stove and oven $2000	Electrician to install, about $200, plus 20% for the builder to oversee = about $240	Half a day
Light fittings	Yes	Sleek oyster fitting $120	Should be able to be installed with the stove	
Floor	No			
Refrigerator	No			
Kickboards	No			

New wall opening	Yes	Gyprock paint sundry materials $500	Buider to strip out the kitchen and remove the wall, $440–880	1–2 days
TOTAL MATERIAL COST: $5810 TOTAL LABOUR COST: $1340–2100 TOTAL TIME: 4–5 days				

Table 14-3
Tom and Belinda's bathroom refurbishment planner

Bathroom	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Floor	Yes, needs to be stripped-out and new waterproofing installed. Possible repairs to structure of the floor, depending on the damage revealed by stripping-out floor.	Unknown until extent of damage is clear; $50 per sq m for floor tiles, for 6 sq m is $300; waterproofing could be $200	Builder charges $440 per day, so it could be $1320	Stripping out floor will take at least 1 day, 1 day of waterproofing and repairs, and 1 day to tile the floor—at least 3 days total

Bathroom	Refurb or not	Material cost guesstimate	Labour cost guesstimate	Time to allocate
Walls	Yes, the wall behind the shower and bath needs to be stripped, waterproofed and retiled.	About 6 sq m of tiles, at $50 per sq m, is $300, plus $200 for waterproofing		Stripping-out wall will be done in conjunction with bathroom floor and at same time.
Bathtub	No, the old steel bathtub can be re-used.			
Toilet	No, the toilet can be re-used.			
Vanity	Yes, a more modern vanity will update the look of the bathroom.	Ready-made white vanity with chrome legs, around $800	Builder will strip-out the old vanity with the floor; a plumber will need to visit the site twice, when the vanity is removed to seal off the old taps and then to install the new taps and vanity, around $800	2 days
Taps	Yes, more modern taps will update the bathroom.	Bath, basin and shower sets, around $360		
Wall cabinet	No			
Light fittings	No			

TOTAL COST: $2160 for materials
TOTAL TIME: At least 5 days of labour, costing more than $2000

Table 14-4

Tom and Belinda's renovation planner 2: From guesstimate to final budget

Task	Guesstimate	Estimate quotes	Final cost estimate	Own time
Knocking breakfast bar hole into the wall between the kitchen and living room	Rubbish removal and labour $400	Quotes ranged from $22 500 to $28 800		A few hours for Belinda to organise quotes
Modernising the kitchen	New cabinets $10 000			
Repairing the water damage in the bathroom and upgrading tiles	Strip-out and new tiles $2000, although it could be more once the cause of the water damage is discovered			
Painting, tiling, new appliances	Tiles $2000 Appliances $2500 Painting $1000			

Total inclusive quote of $24 500 from one design and construct company for all works and materials and appliances
TIME SPENT: Around 18 hours of our own time getting quotes and planning
MONEY SPENT: $24 500
BUILDING TIME: 4 weeks

HIRING THE BUILDER

- **Brief**: Tom and Belinda want a builder to oversee all their renovations and they use their refurbishment planners as a detailed brief.
- **Getting quotes**: Belinda found it extremely frustrating that two of the three builders she contacted did not show up for quotes as they had said they would. She found the design and construct project builders who specialise in bathrooms and kitchens more prompt and courteous: one quote was $24 500, including all materials (which were to be selected from the showroom in a neighbouring suburb), with an expected completion schedule of four weeks. Another quote was for $22 500, but Tom and Belinda would have to supply the tiles as a prime cost item. A local builder quoted for $28 800, but they would have to supply the bathroom tiles and kitchen materials. Belinda liked the salesman from the company that quoted $24 500 and asked the company to provide some references. Belinda spoke to the company's previous clients and they all gave glowing recommendations. All up, Belinda invested more than 16 hours of her time in organising quotes and choosing a builder.

  Even though the kitchen and bathroom specialist building company required Tom and Belinda to sign a simple contract which tied them into paying a hefty up front payment, they found this their best option. The contract outlined all the details of the work, and also included a contingency sum of $5000 in case the water damage in the bathroom was more extensive than initially feared—meaning Tom and Belinda might have to pay $29 500 in total, nearly a 50 per cent budget blow-out. The couple was prepared to take these risks because it meant they could renovate their house with a minimum of fuss.
- **Doing the job**: Tom and Belinda had to select all their kitchen cabinetry, tiles, light fittings and taps at least four weeks before work started so that the materials would be ready for the job. The building company used a team of subcontractors to carry out the work, with the owner of the company, a licensed builder, overseeing the work.

  The builder explained to Tom and Belinda that the renovation would take three to four weeks, provided there were no unforeseen delays with materials or trades. Tom and Belinda were unhappy with the time estimated for the job,

as they had expected it would only take about two weeks! They didn't want the inconvenience of not having a kitchen and bathroom for four weeks, so the family decided to stay with Tom's parents while the renovation took place. Their builder was experienced enough not to promise to do the job any quicker because he knew how long these jobs could take.

The renovation went smoothly, except that after the four weeks the painting still had to be completed, so the family had to live with paint fumes and a bit of mess while this was done.

TOM AND BELINDA'S RENOVATION SCHEDULE

The joy of using design and construct companies is that Tom and Belinda didn't really need to do anything except sit back and wait to be told their renovation schedule. The hardest work they had to do was choose all their finishes, fittings and appliances before the building work began—which wasn't that easy because it required some imagination to envisage what the tiles and colour schemes would look like when completed. It was frustrating that the work took more time than Tom and Belinda had hoped—but that's renovating!

TOM AND BELINDA'S RENOVATION: A SUMMARY

Even though Tom and Belinda didn't have much time for their renovation, they spent it wisely—by planning. Planning helped them to clarify the tasks they wanted to complete, work out whether those planned tasks would fit their budget and then brief the builder so that the renovation was done on time and within budget. Despite a few delays and the hell of renovation with two young children, it was done with as little fuss as could be expected. From floorplan to completion, the renovation only took 12 weeks and the family could then get on with enjoying life in their new home.

Table 14-5

Tom and Belinda's time scheduler for renovation

Task	Four weeks prior to construction				Week 1					Week 2					Week 3					Week 4					Week 5				
	1	2	3	4	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
Choose tiles, kitchen finishes, light fittings, taps and paint colours	*																												
Electrics and plumbing capped				☐																									
Kitchen stripped out								☐	☐																				
Bathroom stripped out							☐	☐																					
Kitchen wall rebuilt										☐	☐																		
Kitchen cupboard doors installed																☐													
Stove delivered and installed																	☐					☐							
Lights																						☐							
Kitchen taps																						☐							
Kitchen benchtop installed														☐	☐														
Splashback tiled																							☐	☐					
Water damage assessed by builder					☐																								
Bathroom waterproofed									☐																				
Vanity delivered and installed					☐												☐												
Tiling in bathroom										☐	☐	☐	☐	☐															
Shower screen installed																	☐												
Plumbing fit-out done																	☐	☐											
Painting																										☐	☐		

☐ Professional tradesperson organised

* Shopping and organising tradespeople

15

roy and camille renovate a semi

Roy and Camille bought a rundown semidetached house in inner-city Melbourne. The semi was probably built around 1905, as it has a mix of Edwardian and Victorian features. It was last renovated in the 1970s, when a basic bathroom was installed at the back of the house and some timber kitchen cabinets were put in. The semi has what Camille calls a 'pizza bar arch' separating the living and dining room. Camille and Roy do not really want to renovate their new home, but they know the house needs cosmetic improvements.

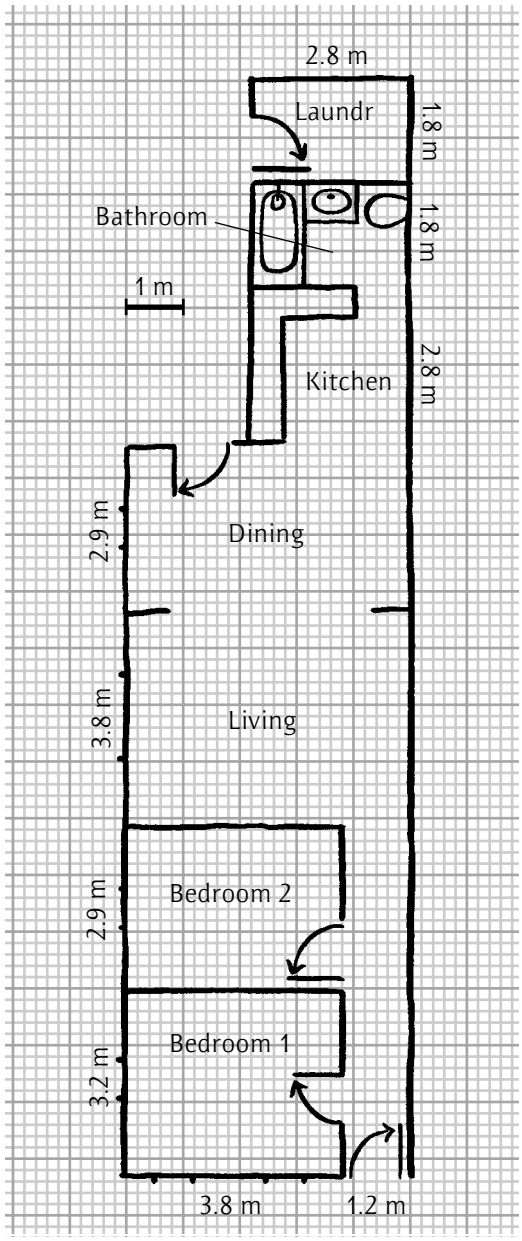
'I think we just need to make it look a bit nicer so that when we do sell, it won't be at a bottom-of-the-market price,' Camille says. The couple plans to sell the semi to upgrade to a three-bedroom freestanding house within five years, which is roughly when they plan to have children. Camille is a freelance graphic designer and Roy is a structural landscaper. The overall goal of the renovation is to enhance the house cosmetically and renovate with plans to improve its long-term value in order to upgrade.

STARTING AT THE BEGINNING

Camille has already painted a bold lilac feature wall in the dining room and has also bought the paint for a feature wall in the bedroom. 'As a designer, I just can't live without some colour,' she says. Roy would prefer a more organised approach

Diagram 15-1

Roy and Camille's semi floorplan



Living room 3.8 m x 5 m = 19 sq m
Dining room 2.9 m x 5 m = 14.5 sq m
Bedroom 1 3.2 m x 3.8 m = 12.16 sq m
Bedroom 2 3.8 m x 2.9 m = 11.02 sq m
Kitchen 2.8 m x 2.8 m = 7.84 sq m
Bathroom 1.8 m x 2.8 m = 5.04 sq m
Laundry 1.8 sq m x 2.8 sq m = 5.04 sq m
Hallway 1.2 m x 6.1 m = 7.32 sq m
TOTAL: 81.92 sq m

to renovating; it's the way he works. The couple start planning their renovation by talking about what they can do to improve the look of the semi and maximise its resale value by compiling a floorplan.

Camille and Roy's floorplan highlights the pokey nature of the semi and its poor connection with the outdoors. They realise how awkward the kitchen and bathroom configuration is. 'I hate having to go to the back of the house to use the loo,' Camille says. She'd like to think about rebuilding the back section of the house, but thinks that they can't afford it.

The couple is stretched financially, and because both of them are contractors, they do not have stable enough incomes to take on more mortgage debt. Camille and Roy have saved $7500 but don't want to spend all of it on the renovations. Their small budget and modest desire to make some cosmetic improvements means that it is easier to work backwards with their budgeting, starting with the total amount and working out how much they can spend per square metre: $7500 divided by 81.92 sq m = $91.55 per square metre.

Looking at the Archicentre costs guide for renovation, outlined in Chapter 2, it will cost between $195 and $415 a square metre for a refurbishment, Roy and Camille realise they will need to be extremely frugal with their renovation. They don't have the money to upgrade or rebuild any failing structures. They do, however, have plenty of time and skills in their favour.

Table 15-1
Roy and Camille's initial wishlist

Room	What needs doing	Guesstimated cost	Priority	Guesstimated time
Hall and living areas	Polish floorboards	$1000	High	As long as necessary to fit the budget
Living and dining	Remove the brick pizza arch between the rooms	$1000	High	As long as necessary to fit the budget
Kitchen	Improve the appearance	$1200	High	As long as necessary to fit the budget

Room	What needs doing	Guesstimated cost	Priority	Guesstimated time
Bathroom	Improve the appearance	$800	High	As long as necessary to fit the budget
All	Repaint the entire house, with feature walls in each room	$1400	High	As long as necessary to fit the budget
Living area and bedrooms	New curtains for all six windows	$1000	High	As long as necessary to fit the budget
Front yard	New plants for front garden strip	$250	Medium	As long as necessary to fit the budget
Front yard	Paint front fence	$400	Medium	As long as necessary to fit the budget
Backyard	Tidy up back garden and paint fence	$600	Medium	As long as necessary to fit the budget

TOTAL COST: $7650
TOTAL TIME: As long as it takes, probably all done on weekends. We are prepared to spend one day each weekend for the next 6–9 months upgrading our semi.

Table 15-2

Roy and Camille weigh up the costs of renovating

Purchase price/current value estimate of property	$440 000
Stamp duty, taxes, legal fees	$24 695
Purchase price needed for resale (add agent's commission)	$464 695 + $9293 (2% agent's commission) = $474 000
Current range of market prices in local area (always compare in same street)	$480 000 to $850 000

Totem-pole pricing—lower, mid or upper	Lower
Reason for totem-pole pricing—position, location, potential etc	Small land size, small house in poor condition
Guesstimated renovation cost	$7500
Proposed time cost	Whatever it takes
Proposed chaos quotient	We know it will be stressful, but believe we have the time to dedicate to a renovation.
Will the renovation change the position on the totem pole?	Potentially. A renovated single-fronted house in our street recently sold for $720 000; a partly renovated semi for $580 000. Our suburb is having a mini-boom as people discover its proximity to the city and its access to shops and cafes. Older-style housing is also relatively rare for Melbourne and is attracting buyers.
Estimated land value of property	Between $350 000 and $400 000 for the land—by far the bulk of the property's value
Estimated value of improvements to property	Mere cosmetic improvements won't actually raise the value of the house much. However, fully renovated and rebuilt properties nearby are commanding premium prices—a good sign.

After weighing up the costs, Roy and Camille realise that cosmetic improvements to the house will make living there more comfortable for the next five years; however, at the end of five years, the cosmetic improvements are likely to be looking worse for wear and won't really add much value to the semi. Roy is also concerned about the mould on the bedroom ceiling and suspects a leaking roof—which is likely to need replacement within the next five years. Roy wisely insists they obtain a thorough building inspection to check for any structural failures which might cost them money in the next five years.

Roy and Camille also know that cosmetically improving the bathroom and kitchen would be throwing money down the drain—the rooms are poorly designed and need rebuilding. In their current configuration, the kitchen and bathroom will always drag down the value of the property to the lower price range. 'The house will always be a "renovator's dream" type of house until the

kitchen and bathroom are improved,' says Roy. 'But with a bit of repair and a good scrub these rooms will at least look well maintained.'

ROY AND CAMILLE'S BUILDING TEST

External walls

- Are the walls straight and level? Yes, the bricks are in good condition with a bit of efflorescence—crumbling seepage—underneath the damp course.
- Is there sub-floor ventilation? The vents underneath the front bedrooms are not very big and ventilation could be improved there.
- Check the underside of the eaves. There is serious waterstaining on the eaves of the freestanding side of the house.

Roof

- Check tiled roofs for broken or missing tiles. Roy has checked the external side of the roof and found three cracked tiles. The gutters are rusted and are not in a straight line.

Inside the roof space

- Check for sagging roof framing, cracked tiles, rusted steel roofs, leaking ridges or valleys. The cracked tiles let water in and there seems to be water damage at the base of the roof where the gutters have failed.
- Look at the quality of the electrical wiring. The house has 1970s' wiring which looks to be in good condition. Installing a safety switch and some smoke detectors would be a good idea for safety.

Plumbing

- Fill the bathtub and then unplug sinks and check how quickly and efficiently the water drains away. The plumbing in the kitchen and bathroom has lots of water hammer and the water pressure is not great. The hot water service is

electric, probably 1970s' vintage—Roy thinks it will need replacing in the next five years.

Overall design

- Are the rooms the correct size for your needs? The kitchen and bathroom are serviceable—but only just. They are in a fibro lean-to at the back of the house and the laundry cannot be accessed from inside. The bedrooms and living spaces are fine, although it would be nicer to open the living space to the outdoors.

ROY AND CAMILLE'S REVISED RENOVATION PLAN

While Camille would love to cosmetically improve the house, Roy is especially concerned about the roof repairs and believes this is the highest priority for the property. Roy would like them to spend their renovation budget on getting council approval for plans to rebuild the back section of the house and add another bedroom. 'I know we can't afford to rebuild just now, but if we spend money getting plans designed and approved, we will probably increase the value of our house more than if we just repaint walls and polish floorboards,' Roy says.

The couple revise their plans and decide they need to explore the best and most cost-effective way to add value to their house. Camille speaks to a local real estate agent, who appraises their property in its current unrenovated state at between $480 000 and $530 000. The agent also tells them that demand is high for stylish architect-designed renovations, with some 'bullish' sales results occurring in the area during the last 12 months and properties fetching between $580 000 and $680 000, with more if there was a third bedroom. The agent suggests that if Roy and Camille get council approval for some architect-designed plans they could add $20 000 to $40 000 in 'value' to their property—'DA Approval' can be a value-adder because many buyers in the local area are keen to renovate but don't want the hassle of going through council or dealing with an architect.

Table 15-3
Roy and Camille's revised renovation wishlist

Room	What needs doing	Guesstimated cost	Priority	Guesstimated time
Exterior	Repair roof tiles, replace gutters	$1200	High	Roy will do it himself over two Saturdays, taking around 16 hours
Entire house	Install safety switch and smoke detectors	$900	High	Electrician needed—Roy to organise quotes, probably 6 hours
Living area	Polish floorboards	$1000	Medium	We will do this ourselves over one weekend and then stay with Camille's sister for the next three days while the floor dries
Entire house	Create a design brief for an architect	Free	Medium	Roy and Camille will spend time on weekends creating a brief for an architect by seeing how they use rooms and what they would like to achieve
	Get plans drawn up to submit to council	$3000 to $8000	Low	Roy and Camille will need to investigate this more to find out costs
TOTAL COST: $6100 to $11 100 TOTAL TIME: 50 hours				

ROY AND CAMILLE CREATE A DESIGN BRIEF

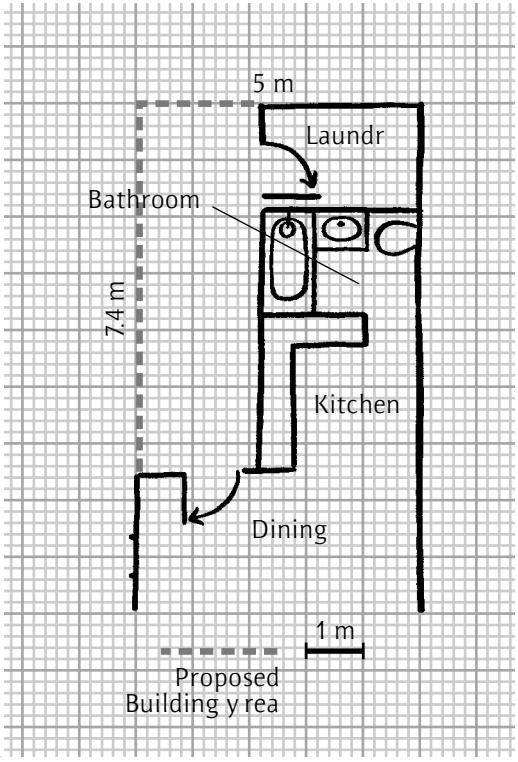
Given that Camille and Roy are unsure if they will ever undertake the renovation, they know they need to find an architect who can do some cost-effective drawings that are stylish but still have broad appeal. Camille starts calling local architects, and the couple also contact Archicentre to get some rough costs.

Archicentre advises Roy and Camille that the architect fees are between 5 and 15 per cent of building costs. The couple want to add a new kitchen, bathroom and laundry, and will probably rebuild an area of 5 m by 7.4 m (37 sq m), which slightly extends the current building area and encloses all the wasted outdoor space surrounding the current kitchen, bathroom and laundry.

Using the Archicentre costs guides to guesstimate the total building cost, Roy and Camille estimate the building work will cost $880 to $1620 per square metre (using 2004 costs). They need to add the cost of a new bathroom, new kitchen and laundry to these estimates—and by the time the renovation is done, no doubt construction costs will have risen.

Diagram 15-2

Proposed rebuilding area



Basic construction cost estimate $880 to $1620 x 37 sq m = $32560 to $59940
New kitchen $6200 to $24400
New bathroom $4600 to $14900
New laundry $2600 to $6700
Guesstimated building costs $44200 to $102700
Guesstimated architectural drafting costs $2210 to $15405

Table 15-4

Roy and Camille's room-by-room mission statements

LIVING AREA	
What activities are undertaken in this room?	We use the living area to watch television, relax after work and read magazines. Camille likes to use this room to store her graphic design books and often rearranges the furniture and knick-knacks to suit her mood. The fridge doesn't fit into the kitchen and currently lives in the dining room.
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?	We use the living room for about 5 hours each evening after work; and Camille takes lunch breaks in the living room for about 40 minutes each work day.
Does it have enough natural light?	No.
Are the doorways in the right places?	Yes.
Are the floorcoverings what we want?	We would like something durable and easy to clean but would like to soften the floor with a rug, so the floorboards are fine.
Are the window treatments what we want?	This room doesn't really need a window treatment as privacy is not an issue.
Would it benefit from built-in storage or furniture?	Not really.
Are there adequate power points for the equipment used in the room?	No, there is only one double power point, which isn't enough.
Is there adequate heating or cooling?	The room has a fireplace, but it can't be used because it only has a grate for coal. It needs more heating in winter.
Would this work better as an open-plan room?	Ideally the lounge will open fully to the dining area to let in more light.

THE LIVING AREA ROOM RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: We like to use the lounge room for relaxing and it is used for at least 20 hours each week. This room will be used the most in the house, so we want it to be relaxing and functional. Because it is the main space in the semi, it should be the focal point of the home and should be close to the kitchen and outdoor areas.

BEDROOMS (2)

What activities are undertaken in this room?	Sleeping and getting dressed. Camille uses the second bedroom as an office. We think it would be better for resale to add a third bedroom to the plans, either by converting the current lounge room into a bedroom or going into the attic.
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?	Asleep for 9–10 hours each night.
Does it have enough natural light?	Yes.
Are the floorcoverings what we want?	No, the carpet needs replacing.
Are the window treatments what we want?	Curtains would be better.
Would it benefit from built-in storage or furniture?	Yes, both bedrooms would benefit from built-in wardrobes, and the study could possibly have a desk and bookcases built in as well.

THE BEDROOM RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: We would like the house to have three bedrooms to maximise the resale potential of the new design. We want our bedrooms to be functional and have adequate storage, but we also want them to feel like a retreat. We spend around 70 hours a week in the main bedroom.

KITCHEN

What activities are undertaken in this room?	Cooking is the only activity that fits in this teensy room.
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?	Between 30 minutes and 1½ hours.
Does it have enough natural light?	Yes, but we want the new kitchen to have more light. It should also connect well to the living spaces and the outdoors.
Are the doorways in the right places?	No. The whole room needs re-orienting.
Are there enough cabinets for storage?	No, we need a large pantry to store food, and space for a refrigerator.
Is there enough bench space?	No.
Are there adequate power points?	No.

THE KITCHEN RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: *We believe the kitchen should be more of a feature in the house and it should have enough space for all our major appliances. We want it to connect to the living and outdoor spaces. It needs to be functional as well as stylish to enhance the property's value.*

BATHROOM	
What activities are undertaken in this room?	*Showering, toileting and grooming. This room needs to be more spacious. We would like a shower, bath and vanity with double basin.* *We also like the idea of concealing laundry services in the bathroom to allow more living space.*
How many hours per day, on average, is it used?	*Around 30 minutes to 1 hour.*
Does it have enough natural light?	*Yes.*

THE BATHROOM RENOVATION MISSION STATEMENT: *The bathroom needs to be large enough to serve the needs of a three-bedroom house but not take up too much floor space. We like to use our bathroom to bathe/brush teeth/do hair and make-up and it is used for 7 or 8 hours each week. A potential buyer of the house would probably like this room to be a sanctuary or escape zone, as they are likely to be a busy professional.*

ROY AND CAMILLE'S FINAL RENOVATION PLAN

The couple have realised they can best improve the resale value of their property by getting plans designed and approved to rebuild the back of the house and install a new kitchen, bathroom and third bedroom, even if they never go through with it themselves. Camille is wary that the plans might not suit all buyers, so she is determined to find an architect who understands this and is also experienced with their style of housing. The couple must also consider the council fees involved in the approval and how long the approval will be valid for.

Roy and Camille have agreed that while the plans are drawn up and approved, they will also spend part of their budget on making the house comfortable to live in, including polishing the floorboards, repairing the roof and repainting gradually.

Table 15-5

Roy and Camille's renovation planner 2: From guesstimate to final budget

Task	Guesstimate	Estimate quotes	Final cost	Own time estimate/final
Repair roof tiles	$100 to buy three new tiles	Roy finds a demolition yard where he can buy three matching tiles for $5 each	$15	6 hours to search hardware stores and building suppliers to find the tiles; 4 hours to replace them
Replace gutters	$200 for guttering materials	Roy gets a trade discount from a building supply company and purchases materials for $128	$128	Roy has never installed gutters before, so it takes him two full 8-hour days to plan the job, complete it and ensure the gutters function properly. He tests the gutters with buckets of water.
Install safety switch and smoke detectors	$900	Three quotes obtained, from $760 to $980	$760	Around 2 hours for Roy to get quotes and check out electricians

Task	Guesstimate	Estimate quotes	Final cost	Own time estimate/final
Polish floorboards	$1000	$147 to hire floor sander for a weekend, $50 to hire an edge sander as well, two 4-litre tins of tung oil at $87 each (to finish floor), $30 for a lambswool applicator and $35 for Gemini (to cover the oil); Roy has estimated it will cost less than $500		One day to move all the furniture out, 1 day to sand the floors and 1 day to oil and finish the floors—about 24 hours of labour, plus another 3 days of not using the house after the oil is applied; have to wear socks for the first week
Repaint room-by-room	$1400	Camille thinks we can save money by not painting all the walls and ceilings and instead concentrating on feature walls and touching up the paint on the skirtings, doors and windows	Camille finds that old-fashioned paint formulations offer the colours she wants, but are nearly double the price of acrylic paints —about $600 for the paint and $120 for brushes and clean-up materials	Camille will spend 8 hours every Saturday painting a room—there are 8 rooms in the house, so about 64 hours in total

Employ an architect to draw up rebuild plans	$4000 to $9000	Camille gets four quotes which all fall within the guesstimate. One architect needs some graphic design work done, and they do a deal to trade each other's skills. The architect offers a fixed price for concepts and plans for council at $5500; Camille provides some graphic design work		Finding an architect takes Camille more than 6 hours in phone calls; doing the design work takes even longer, around 8 hours

GENERAL APPROACH TO RENOVATIONS: We plan to improve our property slowly while we get the architect to design the full renovation. There's no major rush, as we plan to stay in the house for the next five years.
TOTAL TIME: 122 hours GUESSTIMATED TIME: More than 40 hours
TOTAL COST: $7623 GUESSTIMATED COST: $7500

HIRING PROFESSIONALS

Architect

- **Brief**: Design some concepts to create a three-bedroom semi with new kitchen and bathroom and open-plan lounge and dining room connecting to the outdoors.
- **Getting quotes**: Archicentre could provide a contact for an architect who would do a 'renovation report' for around $900. This included two or three different concept drawings; if they liked the designs, Roy and Camille could then commission more detailed drawings to send to council for approval. The more detailed drawings would cost between $3000 and $8000, depending on the complexity.

Camille spent a lot of time researching architects who had worked on semis, and even knocked on the door of a house around the corner that had been renovated to ask which architect the owners had used. As well as offering a good deal, the architect Roy and Camille chose also specialised in residential renovations.

- **Doing the job**: Roy and Camille did not realise the process of using an architect to draw up plans would be so time-consuming—it took more than 30 weeks from initial phone contact with the architect to council approval.

  At the first meeting, Roy and Camille presented the architect with their measured floorplan and room-by-room mission statements. The architect returned three weeks later with some concepts.

  At the second meeting, Roy and Camille were shown three different floorplan concepts. They decided to go with the third concept, which they believed would be the most valuable for resale purposes, even though it would cost more to build than the others.

  At the third meeting, they asked the architect to move the position of the bathroom and create the DA drawings for the local council. This took another 4 weeks and the plans were finally lodged with the council 14 weeks after the first phone call to the architect. It took the council 16 weeks to approve the plans, and this involved one visit by a council planner, which took about an hour of Camille's time.

ROY AND CAMILLE'S RENOVATION SCHEDULE

Roy and Camille were prepared to commit one Saturday each week for as long as it took to get the job done. They were dedicated and did not take any weekends off, unlike most normal people! They also used their own skills wisely, to both plan and carry out their renovation.

Diagram 15-3
Architectural designs for the semi

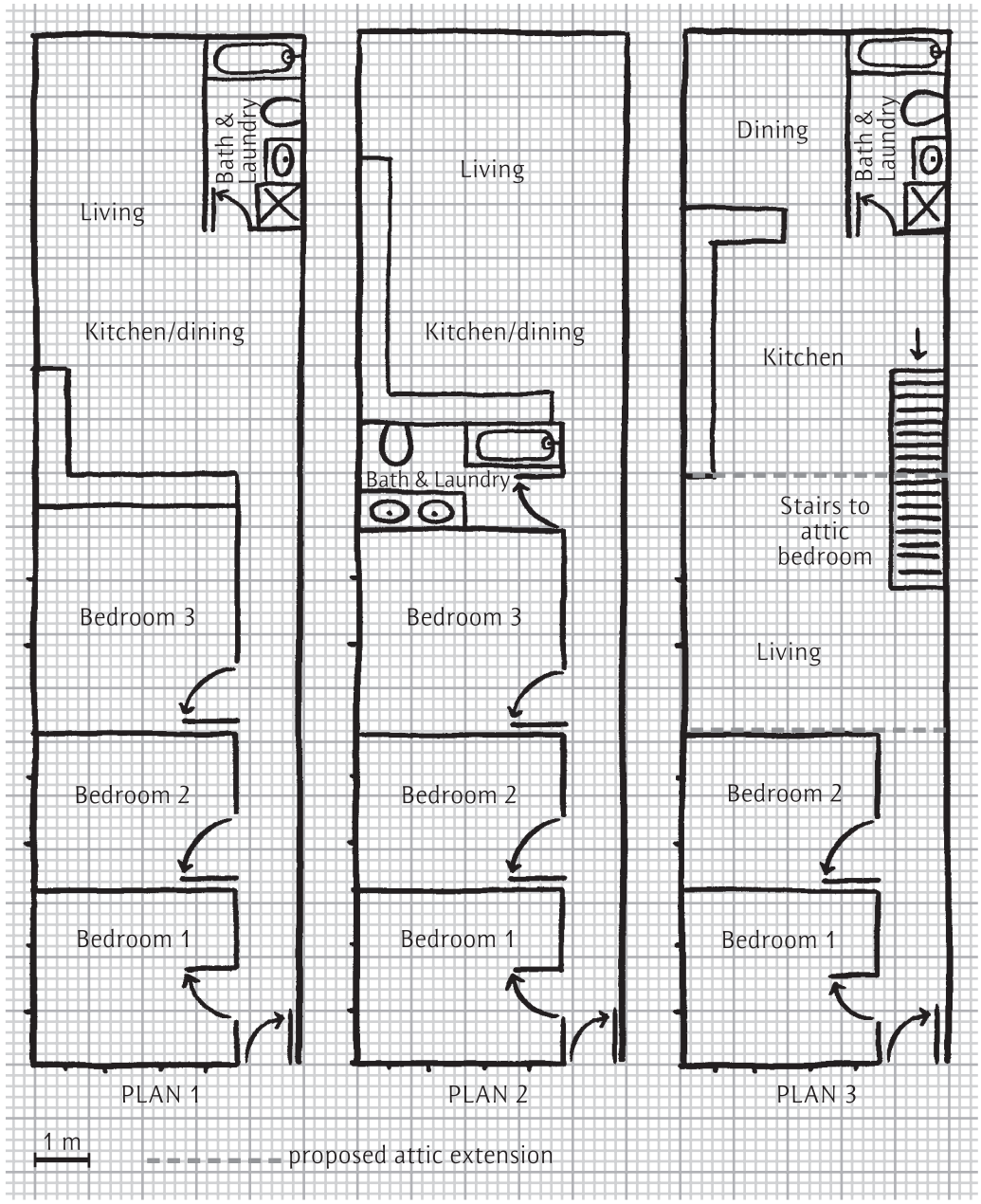


Table 15-6

Roy and Camille's time scheduler for renovation

Task	Weekend 1		Weekend 2		Weekend 3		Weekend 4	
	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun
Polish floorboards	✕	✕	✕	✕				
Repair roof tiles					✕			
Replace gutters							✕	
Paint Bedroom 1					✕			
Paint Bedroom 2							✕	
Paint hallway								
Paint living room								
Paint dining room								
Paint kitchen								
Paint bathroom								
Paint laundry								
Employ architect	☐							
Get first architectural concepts							☐	
Get DA prepared								
Submit DA to council (approval takes 16 weeks)								

☐ Professional organised
✕ Roy and Camille DIY

Weekend 5		Weekend 6		Weekend 7		Weekend 8		Weekend 9		Weekend 10	
Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun
✕											
✕		✕									
				✕							
						✕					
								✕			
										✕	
			□							✕	

ROY AND CAMILLE'S RENOVATION: A SUMMARY

Roy and Camille bought a rundown semi in an up-and-coming inner-city suburb. They want to maximise the value of the semi so they can afford to upgrade to a larger house in a few years. They don't have a lot of spare money to spend on renovating, but they are prepared to invest their time.

Once they embark on the planning process the couple discover that employing an architect to design plans to extend the house is the best way to improve the value of their semi. Camille and Roy are also considering the possibility of staying in the semi and actually completing the renovation. They know they cannot afford to do it now, but with stamp duty cost so high in Victoria (around $40 000 to purchase a $600 000 property) the couple might be better off in the long term if they rebuild their current house.

Even though Roy and Camille departed from their initial plans, they managed to stick close to their original budget and also found ways to spend their money well. Their willingness to dedicate their own time and skills to the renovation had paid off.

16

the final word on planning

Because there are so many endless combinations of materials, tasks and trades involved in renovation, it is entirely understandable that renovation can seem daunting, endlessly expensive and time-consuming. Anyone interested in improving a property is doing themselves a favour by planning, even if the plan is to employ professionals to do everything! An overall renovation plan will help you:

- decide where to start
- guesstimate the costs and time involved
- schedule the job
- complete the renovation according to your own needs and expectations.

There are many planners scattered throughout this book, some of which will apply to your renovations and others which will be of little relevance. The key planners for ALL renovations are:

1. An initial floorplan (see page 5)—This will give you a square metreage of the property and help you see any design flaws. The size of the space helps you guesstimate the costs involved in renovating.
2. An initial wishlist (see page 14)—A room-by-room list of the jobs that need to be completed, with guesstimates of costs and time involved.

3. Further investigation—This will be different for every renovation. Some people will start by obtaining further quotes for professionals to help with the renovation. Other people will start doing the jobs themselves on the weekend. All planners (but especially the estimating and scheduling planners in Chapter 5) will help guide you to investigate your own choices for renovation.

DIY vs builders

Benefits of DIY

- Have control over the timing, cost and schedules
- Can stop the job when you run out of money
- Satisfying to work on your own home
- Learn new skills
- Can save up to 30 per cent of costs

Drawbacks of DIY

- Can injure yourself
- Can be expensive to buy tools and protective equipment
- Can spend more on materials
- May have to call in professionals anyway
- Can be stressful due to lack of expertise

Benefits of using a builder

- Saves your time
- Technical expertise—everything is in the hands of a professional
- Jobs can be scheduled more effectively
- Materials and labour are obtained at the most competitive trade rates
- All insurance, OH&S requirements and warranties are in place
- Good communication

Drawbacks of using a builder

- Delays can happen and can be frustrating and costly to you
- Cost of labour and experience—a builder's margin of 15 to 30 per cent
- A small minority of builders 'disappear' during a job and fail to complete
- Disputes with building contracts are time consuming and stressful.

4. Final renovation plan—Once your investigations are complete, you are ready to make a final renovation plan. Your final plan will outline all of the renovation tasks and costs to be outlaid. It will also involve a schedule. Scheduling each renovation task is an art unto itself, and is explained in Chapter 5.

If you use the planners in this book successfully, you will end up with a few sheets of paper that methodically detail your renovation so that even if you are going insane, your renovation plans stay on track.

Remember, there are three different types of renovation:

1. Maintenance
2. Refurbishment
3. Rebuilding.

Even if this book has made you realise that all your property needs is a damn good clean and a few basic repairs, then it has been a success. If this book has inspired you to ditch all thoughts of DIY and engage the professionals to overhaul your property, then that's great too.

The best renovations aren't fuelled by pots of money or high-minded design ideals, but by common sense, a little creativity and planning. It helps to understand just how much you are prepared to do yourself and how much you need to subcontract. And even if you do plan on hiring professionals every step of the way, a little planning will help you keep schedules and fees on track.

Go on, unleash your creativity, start some planning and have some fun.

Good luck!

Important questions to ask

Questions to ask an architect or building designer

- What level of service do they provide: just design ideas or drawings to submit to council?
- Will the architect do detailed drawings and specifications to form part of the building contract?
- Will the architect do contract administration and oversee all building on the job?
- Can you see some of their previous work, especially any jobs that are similar to your own?
- Is the architect experienced at designing renovations to a budget?
- Will the architect charge a fixed fee or a percentage of the building cost?
- How will payment be scheduled?

Questions to ask a builder

- What projects are they currently working on?
- Have they completed any projects that are similar to yours? (Try to get addresses so you can have a look.)
- Do they have references? (Follow up on them.)
- When you get the builder's quote, check to see that it includes everything from your brief. Are the designs, drawings and specified materials and trades outlined in the quote?
- What is the payment schedule and type of contract to be used?
- Are there any inclusions you need to add to the contract?
- Have you agreed on any extra fees if there are variations to the contract?

glossary

Architrave The timber or MDF moulding around doors and windows that hides the joint between the frames and the walls.

Aggregate Particles of sand or stone mixed with cement and water to make concrete or sometimes added to paint to create a textured finish.

Awning window Hinged at the top, opens at the bottom and can be weatherproof during rains even if it remains open.

Bargeboard A sloping board fixed to a roof gable, usually for decorative purposes.

Batt A short cut length of insulation which can be made of fibreglass or wool.

Beam A horizontal load-carrying piece of timber that often supports other parts of the building.

Bearer A timber beam that supports the floor joists.

Bib cocks Separate hot and cold water taps mounted on the wall above baths and sinks in older properties.

Bifold doors Doors with two to four panels which hinge back to each other, leaving an open space between the indoors and outdoors.

Bill of quantities A list prepared by a quantity surveyor or professional outlining the cost of materials, labour and fixtures and fittings involved in building and renovation works.

Bulkhead A lowered part of a ceiling used to conceal services such as plumbing.

Casement window Hinged like a door and used in pairs.

CCTV Closed circuit television, sometimes used as a security system.

Chalkline A straight line between two points made by using a string covered in chalk.

Chase A groove cut in masonry or plaster to accept pipework or electrical cable.

Circuit A complete path through which an electrical current passes. Most houses have two or three circuits, with overhead lighting often on a different circuit to power points.

Circuit breaker A safety device which acts as a fuse.

Cornice The moulding between the walls and ceiling of a room.

Countersink To cut a tapered recess that allows the head of a screw to lie flush with the surface it's being screwed into.

Cup To bend as a result of shrinkage—often happens with floorboards.

Dado The lower part of the interior wall defined by a moulding. Sometimes similar to a chair rail.

Damp course The waterproof membrane built into brick walls to stop dampness from the ground penetrating the masonry.

Datum point The point from which measurements are taken. Surveyors sometimes mark them on the street.

Diverter spout A special tap that can be used to fill a bath or to divert the water flow to a shower rose.

Double-hung windows Vertically sliding sashes which offer good ventilation.

Drip groove A groove that is cut or moulded into the underside of a windowsill to stop rainwater from running into the wall.

Eaves The part of the roof that overhangs the perimeter walls.

Earth A connection between an electrical circuit and the earth.

Efflorescence A white powdery substance on the surface of walls or ceilings, sometimes called salt damp, caused by the minerals in the masonry or render depositing on the surface.

Fascia The strip of wood that covers the ends of rafters and to which external guttering is attached.

French doors Usually used in pairs, with panels of glass, to open outwards.

Flashing Flexible waterproof sheet material that prevents water penetration. Often used on roofs, window heads and under windowsills. It is important that flashing materials are compatible with roofing and or wall materials, and as some metals used in combination can rust and cause water penetration.

Footing The lowest part of the structure that anchors the building to the ground.

Foundation The part of the ground that the footing sits on.

Frog The angled depression in one face of some housebricks.

Gable A vertical triangle-shaped end to a roof that can become a feature.

Galvanised Covered with a protective coating of zinc.

Grout A cement or acrylic compound used to fill the joints between tiles on floors and walls.

Head The horizontal upper framing area of a door or window.

Hip roof A roof where all sides are tiled and pitched at the same angle; often used in older homes.

Hose cock Usually a brass bib cock tap with a screwed edge allowing the garden hose to be attached.

Insulation Materials to reduce the transmission of heat or sound—the needs differ from climate to climate. Also the nonconductive material around electrical wires.

Jamb The vertical members of a door or window frame.

Joist The framing that spans between walls or beams and which floor and ceiling linings are attached to.

Key To abrade (roughen) a surface to provide better grip, especially in regard to tiles.

Lintel A horizontal bearing beam that spans an opening in a wall; can be made of timber, steel or concrete.

Mastic A non-setting compound used to seal joints.

Mitre A joint formed between two pieces of wood by cutting angles at the end of each piece.

Mixing valve or mixer tap A single tap with a two-way turn to regulate temperature and flow.

Mortise A rectangular recess cut in timber to receive a matching tongue or tenon.

Mullion A vertical dividing member of a window frame.

Muntin A central vertical member of a panel door.

Newel The post at the top or bottom of a flight of stairs which supports the handrail.

Nogging A short horizontal wooden member between studs.

Party wall A common wall between two houses over which each adjoining home-owner has rights in law.

Pillar cock A tap, usually mounted in the basin or sink flange, where the water inlet pipe is parallel to the spout.

Phase The part of an electrical circuit that carries the flow of current to an appliance or accessory.

Pressure reduction valve An automatically operating valve that limits the flow of water in areas of high water pressure which could otherwise cause the pipes to burst.

Prime cost A building term that implies the renovator buys the item separately, so the cost is over and above the builder's quote.

Profile The outline or contour of an object, usually a skirting or architrave.

Purlin A horizontal beam that provides intermediate support for rafters or sheet roofing.

Rafter The roof framing beams that run from the top of the wall to the ridge and support the roof.

Recess cock Tap handle and body used behind tiles for baths, showers and sinks.

Residual current device Also known as a safety switch. More useful than just a circuit breaker as it can detect an imbalance caused by earth leakage and cut off the electricity supply.

Reveal The vertical side of an opening in a wall.

Riser The part of the stair that is vertical.

Rolled steel joist (RSJ) A steel beam with a cross-section in the form of the letter I.

Sarking A waterproof material that often reflects heat and is fixed over the rafters; it sometimes doubles as roof insulation.

Sash The part of a window that opens.

Scantlings Sawn framing timber.

Score To scratch a line with a pointed tool.

Skillion A roof style that slopes one way only and is often used in extensions.

Sill The lowest horizontal member of a frame that surrounds a door or window.

Skirting A board that goes along the bottom of a wall around a room.

Sliding doors Doors which slide to the side but have one panel fixed.

Sliding window Sashes slide to the side with one fixed panel and one sliding panel or two sliding and a fixed centre panel.

Soffit The lower lining of anything, especially the eaves lining.

Spandrel The triangular infill below the outer string of a staircase.

Stop cock Taps used on toilet cistern supply pipes, hot water service supply lines and dishwasher supply pipes to turn the water supply off to areas that might need servicing.

Stud partition A timber-frame interior dividing wall.

Tamp To pack down firmly.

Torque A rotational force.

Transom A horizontal dividing member of a window frame.

Trap A bent section of pipe below a bath or sink containing standing water to prevent the passage of gas.

Tread The horizontal part of the stair (sometimes called a going).

Truss A preconstructed beam or roof frame designed to span large distances.

Verandah plate A beam that supports a verandah roof.

Wall cavity A wall which has two skins with a space in between for water to escape.

Wall tie A strip of metal or wire used to bind sections of masonry together.

Warp To bend as a result of damp or heat; often happens with timber.

WC Water closet (toilet).

Water hammer Vibration in plumbing caused by fluctuating water pressure.

Weep hole A small hole at the base of a cavity wall that allows absorbed water to drain to the outside.

handy websites

Archicentre	www.archicentre.com.au
Australian Paint Manufacturers Association	www.apmf.asn.au
Royal Australian Institute of Architects product selector	www.selector.com
Master Builders Association Australia	www.masterbuilders.com.au
Queensland Master Builders Association	www.qmba.com.au
Master Builders Association of South Australia	www.mbasa.com.au
Master Builders Association of NSW	www.mbansw.asn.au
Master Builders Association of the ACT	www.mba.org.au
Master Builders Association of WA	www.mbawa.com
Master Builders Association of Victoria	www.mbav.com.au
Master Builders Association of Tasmania	www.mbatas.org.au
Housing Industry Association	www.buildingonline.com.au
Timber Development Association	www.timber.net.au
Cement and Concrete Association	www.concrete.net.au
Australian Standards	www.standards.com.au
Department of Fair Trading NSW	www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au
Office of Fair Trading Queensland	www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au
Department of Consumer and Employment Protection WA	www.docep.wa.gov.au
ACT Office of Fair Trading	www.fairtrading.act.gov.au
Office of Consumer Affairs and Trading Tasmania	www.justice.tas.gov.au
Northern Territory Consumer and Business Affairs	www.caba.nt.gov.au
Consumer Affairs Victoria	www.consumer.vic.gov.au
Do it yourself information	www.doityourself.com
Project homes and kit homes	www.buildhome.com.au