

TRUSTED REMODEL ADVISOR



***The Empowering Homeowner's Guide to
Winning Against the Remodeling Industry***

by **Andy Gibbs**
Architectural Engineer • Contractor • Advisor

**50 YEARS
OF DESIGN
ENGINEERING
CONSTRUCTING &
MANAGING HOME
REMODELS**

- Manage Your Remodel And Save Thousands
- Find, Screen And Hire The Right Contractors
- Keep Family And Pets Safe During A Remodel
- Protect Your Investment - Before, During & After the Remodel

TRUSTED REMODEL ADVISOR

The Empowering Homeowner's Guide to Winning Against the Remodeling Industry

Learn Industry Secrets, Eliminate Hidden Costs, and Take Total Control of Your Dream Remodel

by Andy Gibbs ([click to contact Author by email](#))

Published: [Trusted Remodel Advisor .com](https://TrustedRemodelAdvisor.com)

INTRODUCTION

TRUSTED REMODEL ADVISOR is the unfiltered, no-nonsense guide to turning homeowners into battle-ready remodel commanders. This book fearlessly pulls back the curtain on the remodeling industry, exposing its darkest corners and arming you with the knowledge to take full control of your project. Whether you're chasing a dream transformation or bracing for a necessary upgrade, **TRUSTED REMODEL ADVISOR** equips you with the tools to **screen, hire, and manage contractors like a pro** - while dodging the landmines of **overcharges, shoddy work, and endless delays**. With decades of real-world experience, I reveal the **red flags that can sink your budget, the insider tricks contractors hope you never learn, and the strategies to keep your family, pets, and home safe** from financial and physical harm. From slashing unnecessary costs to **bulletproofing your contract**, this book is your ultimate **weapon against remodeling disasters**—because in the world of construction, **you either take control, or you get taken for a ride.**

TRUSTED REMODEL ADVISOR

First Edition

Copyright © 2025 Andy Gibbs
[Trusted Remodel Advisor](#)

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means - electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise - without the prior written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations in reviews. Some images in this book were generated using AI tools; the arrangement, and editorial context of these images are original works subject to copyright protection.

All Rights Reserved

Dedication

To my wife Paula, my unwavering partner through the dust, noise, and chaos of every remodel. Your patience, vision, resilience, as well as your stunning artwork have turned construction zones into dream homes. You've not only endured, but inspired the designs that make our living spaces truly dramatic. This book - and every wall, floor, and finish we've built together - is a testament to you.

TRUSTED REMODEL ADVISOR

The Empowering Homeowner's Guide to Winning Against the Remodeling Industry

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
Let's Be Clear, Folks	7
Remodeling Matters	10
Sequence Matters	13
Family & Home Safety	16
REMODEL BOOTCAMP	18
Know Your "WHY"	19
Choose Your "WHAT"	22
Decide Your "HOW"	25
Remodel vs. New Build	28
Red Tape, Permits, HOAs	32
Outdoor Remodels	36
BIDS TO BOILERPLATE	41
Speak Contractor-ese	42
Pre-Bid Specifications	45
Pre-Bid Intangibles	52
Contractor Bid Reviews	57
Negotiate Everything	60
Extraordinary Savings Tips	64
Add Your Boilerplate	67
WHO'S GONNA' BUILD IT?	75
D.I.Y., Handyman, Pro?	76
Handyman V Contractor	79
Contractor Red Flags	84
Background Checks	91
CASH MANAGEMENT	95
Big Picture Finance	96
Pay The Man	101
Top 16 Budget-Busters	105
PROJECT MANAGEMENT	113
Getting Your MBA	114
Your Verbal Tool Belt	119
The Punch List	123
LIVING WITH A REMODEL	129
Top 25 Disruptions During A Remodel	130
Surviving The Chaos	134
Contract Stipulations	139
Remodeling With Pets	143
Temp Kitchens & Baths	150
BEWARE MURPHY'S LAW	156
Remodel Warranties	157
Total Home Protection	162
THAT'S A WRAP	167
Movin' On In	168
You're Remodel-Ready	172
About The Author	174
Index	176



SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

This is not your average remodeling book.

Remodeling is a War, Not a Shopping Spree: Get ready for a challenging journey. This section equips you with the battle plan and survival skills you need to emerge victorious.

Trust No One (Except Me - you'll learn why). Assume that everyone, your contractor, designer, even your friendly neighbor with "great" advice – has an angle when it comes to your home remodel - until they prove otherwise. It's your money, your home, so play by your rules.

Informed Homeowners Win. From budgeting and contracts to safety and sneaky contractor tricks, the next few chapters will arm you with the knowledge you need to make informed decisions and avoid costly mistakes. The more you know, the less likely you'll get screwed.

And since you're exposing your family and property to dozens of new people unknown, you'll be introduced to a lot of safety tips that are rarely addressed on fancy Pinterest boards or Martha Stewart inspired remodeling books.



CHAPTER 01

Let's Be Clear, Folks

We need to lay a solid foundation for our relationship.

I'm not here to stroke your dreams or ego, or blow smoke up your butt.

I'm here to give you the facts on remodeling as I know them, share the valuable tips as I've earned over the last half century (really), and toughen you up to manage an on-time, on budget remodel project on your home the right way, the first time.

As your Trusted Remodel Advisor, I'll show you the dangers you'll encounter (you can't imagine), and empower you to become stronger and smarter before making one of the biggest investments you'll make in your home. Contractors are going to throw every trick in the book at you, and you need to see that sneaky right hook coming out of nowhere fast enough to avoid the hit.

And if you find anything personally offensive (you probably will) - it's because I want you to get over it - get smarter - get tougher - take control - and win. So let's get to work.

You just made a tiny investment in this book – your first smart move!
What follows could SAVE you 1000 times what you just paid ... like \$30,000 on a major remodel - or more?

So let's be honest, diving into a remodel is like jumping into a shark tank – where the sharks wear tool belts. I've spent the last 50 years swimming with (and calling out) these sharks, and I've learned a thing or two about how to avoid having them take a bite out of my dreams or wallet.

The following Top 10 Rules are the foundation for the rest of *Trusted Remodel Advisor*™, the cheat sheet you need **before** you make first contractor contact.

My Top 10 Remodeling Ground Rules For EVERY Homeowner.

1. **Trust is For Suckers (Until It's Earned):** Don't blindly trust anyone with your family's safety or finances. Assume everyone is trying to rip you off until they prove otherwise.
2. **Know Your Vision (Or They'll Sell You Theirs):** Have a crystal-clear plan *before* talking to contractors. Otherwise, they'll happily upgrade you to "next level" broke.
3. **Get Multiple Bids (Or Get Taken to the Cleaners):** Always get at least 3 bids. Compare qualifications and approach, not just the bottom line (though that matters, too).
4. **Never Pay Upfront (Unless You're Cool with Getting Ghosted):** Use a payment schedule tied to milestones. Hold that final payment hostage until you're 100% satisfied. Contractor wants full payment upfront? Run away, don't walk.
5. **Get Everything in Writing (Unless You Enjoy Being Gaslit):** Insist on a contract covering Every. Single. Detail. Scope, materials, timeline, payments, change orders – the whole shebang. Contractor balks? Walk away.
6. **Do Background Checks (Unless You Like Finding Out Your Contractor is an Ex-Con):** Check criminal, license, and civil records. Verify references. Contractor refuses a background check? See ya.
7. **Don't Be Bullied (Unless You Enjoy Being Someone's Doormat):** Contractors are salespeople. Don't let them pressure you. Uncomfortable? Walk away. Seriously.
8. **Plan for the Apocalypse (Because Remodels Are War):** Budget 15-20% extra for the inevitable "surprises." Have a plan B for living

arrangements because things will go sideways.

- 9. Document Everything (Unless You Want to Lose Your Shirt):** Take before/after photos. Keep every receipt, email, and scrap of paper. Understand warranties and follow-up processes. Paper trail, people.
- 10. Trust Your Gut (It's Usually Right):** If something feels fishy, it probably is. Don't ignore those red flags. Walk away. No amount of "savings" is worth the headache.

Study those again every few chapters or so.

Dive in – the water's gonna get too hot for sharks.

Remodeling Matters

Why This Book Matters to You

You've picked up this book, so you're the smart homeowner who:

- 🔑 Wants to make **informed decisions** and not get ripped off.
- 🔑 Values quality but **doesn't want to pay stupid money** for it.
- 🔑 Won't become a "homeowner got screwed by a bad contractor" statistic.
- 🔑 Wants a **beautifully upgraded home** without getting steamrolled by contractors.

The 3 Key Takeaways You'll Get from This Book

1. How to Save Thousands of Dollars Without Sacrificing Quality

Most homeowners blow past their remodel budget by 20-40% because they don't know the insider tricks of the trade. You're about to learn:

- How to **shop like a pro** and get top-tier materials for bottom-dollar prices.

- Why you should **never share your budget** upfront with contractors.
- The secret of pre-bid specifications (this alone could **save you \$10,000+**).
- How to **negotiate like a contractor**—because their first bid is never their best bid.

2. How to Avoid Contractor & Budget Nightmares

You’ve heard the horror stories—contractors disappearing mid-project, costs skyrocketing, and months-long delays. But here’s the truth: most of these nightmares are preventable if you know what to look out for. You’ll discover:

- The top red flags that scream “scam” before you hire anyone.
- How to create a bulletproof contract that protects you, not the contractor.
- Why remodels go over budget (and how to stop it from happening to you).
- How to compare bids properly—spoiler: it’s not just about the lowest price.

3. How to Protect Your Investment—Before, During & After the Remodel

A remodel isn’t just about function and beauty—it’s also about protecting your home’s value and long-term livability. You’ll learn:

- Why updating your home insurance after a remodel is a smart move.
- How to handle warranties like a pro—because there are two levels of warranties, and your contractor should provide both.
- When home warranties are a smart backup to manufacturer and contractor warranties.
- How to maintain your remodel properly so your investment doesn’t crumble in five years.

Because if you think this is going to be an effortless Amazon Prime 2-day transformation, you’re in for a wake-up call.

I wrote this book to arm you with the knowledge you need to survive (and thrive) during your remodel. I’ve seen just about everything: shady contractors

pulling fast ones, homeowners blindsided by hidden costs, and remodels that spiraled into six-figure money pits due to poor planning. But I've also seen remodels done right - stunning, creative projects that not only transformed homes but also protected homeowners' wallets, sanity, and long-term investments.

What This Book Isn't

This ain't your grandma's Pinterest-perfect remodel guide. No \$20,000 Wolf stoves here, just real-world been-there, done-that advice, real costs, and real strategies and tips from the trenches to get you that high-quality dream remodel without breaking the bank.

Let's Start Your Remodel the Right Way.

This book is your battle plan for a successful remodel. By the time you finish reading, you'll know exactly how to hire the right contractors, buy the right materials, and manage your project like a pro. And best of all—you'll have the confidence to **take total control of your remodel** and get the home you deserve without the nightmare stories.



Sequence Matters

The Remodel Roadmap: Why Every Step Matters

Diving into a remodel without a plan is like setting sail without a map—you'll waste time, money, and sanity. Remodeling isn't a series of disconnected tasks; it's a **step-by-step process where each phase builds upon the last**. Skip one, and your project can spiral into chaos.

This book is your battle plan. It arms you with the strategy to **stay in control, prevent costly mistakes, and ensure an on-time, on-budget remodel**. Each chapter follows a **critical sequence**—preparation, specification, bidding, hiring, project management, and final inspection—because each step is essential.

Phase 1: Preparation – Setting the Foundation

Before swinging a hammer, **you need a strategy**. Why are you remodeling? What's a must-have vs. a nice-to-have? A lack of clarity leads to overspending, regret, and contractors selling you on what benefits them, not you.

Preparation also means understanding **permits, zoning laws, and HOA rules**. Ignoring these can lead to costly shutdowns and legal trouble. Get it right now, or pay later.

Phase 2: Specification – Taking Control

Most homeowners botch their remodel at this stage. Without a **detailed pre-bid specification**, contractors dictate materials, designs, and pricing. That’s how budgets get wrecked.

A **pre-bid spec** locks in your vision—materials, layouts, finishes, fixture brands—so **contractors bid on your terms**. Without it, you’ll get vague estimates full of loopholes and surprise costs.

Phase 3: Bidding – Apples-to-Apples Comparison

Contractor bids are **Trojan Horses** packed with hidden costs. The cheapest bid isn’t always the best, and the highest bid isn’t always honest.

This book teaches you to **break down bids line by line**—labor, materials, overhead—to spot inflated prices, exclusions, and sneaky upsells that could balloon your budget by 30% or more.

Phase 4: Hiring – Separating Pros from Scammers

Your contractor choice **makes or breaks** your remodel. A well-priced bid means nothing if the contractor is unreliable, uninsured, or incompetent.

You’ll learn how to **screen contractors like an investigator**—checking licenses, references, past work, and red flags. You’ll also master contract negotiations to ensure you’re protected before signing anything.

Phase 5: Managing the Remodel – Keeping Control

Even the best contractors need oversight. Homeowners who “set it and forget it” get stuck with delays, surprise charges, and sloppy work.

You’ll learn how to **track progress, enforce quality control, and prevent contractor excuses**. Payment schedules, documentation, and site inspections will keep your project on track and your **money in your pocket**.

Phase 6: Inspection & Completion – Finishing Strong

Rushing through the final walkthrough is a rookie mistake. Many

homeowners **don't spot defects until months later**, when fixing them becomes their problem.

You'll learn how to **create a punch list**, withhold final payment until every issue is resolved, and demand proper warranties and lien waivers so your investment is fully protected.

Why This Order is Non-Negotiable

Each phase of remodeling **relies on the last**. Skip one, and the whole thing crumbles. No preparation? Expect budget chaos. No specifications? Contractors call the shots. Hire the wrong team? Get ready for missed deadlines and endless headaches.

This isn't about **hoping** for a smooth remodel—it's about **taking control**. Follow this sequence, and you'll **have the home you want, at the price you planned, with zero regrets**.

Now, let's start where all successful remodels begin—**preparing the right way**.

Page 16-24
Not Included in Sample

Decide Your “HOW”



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Gain Insight On Your Build Choices*
- *How To Make Those “Sweet Spot” Choices*
- *Maximizing Your Outcome, Minimizing Risk*

Hey cowboy, Saddle up! You’re the Remodel Ramrod.

You’ve got that dream kitchen pinned, that spa bathroom envisioned, maybe even a backyard oasis shimmering in your imagination. Hold up, buttercup. Before you grab a sledgehammer, determine HOW you’re going to pull it off.

This ain’t about cabinet styles or paint swatches (although those are important, don’t get me wrong). This is about the nitty-gritty, down-and-dirty process – the reality of turning other peoples’ Pinterest boards into your reality. And trust me, this one decision will make or break your budget, your timeline, and your sanity. So, listen up.

You’ve got three main options - let’s break ‘em down:

- **The D.I.Y.**
- **The handyman hustle**
- **The GC (general contractor) gig.**

D.I.Y. (Do It Yourself)

Think you're ready to single-handedly remodel your kitchen? Be honest. Like, really honest. Are you a plumbing wizard? An electrical guru? A tiling titan? Do you even know what a building code is? Because if not, you're about to enter a world of hurt. Think floods, fires, and a house that looks like a tornado hit it.

DIY MIGHT save some cash if you graduated top 10 from YouTube U. But a botched DIY job? That'll cost you way more than hiring a pro, plus the potential for, you know, death. I've seen it. Homeowners with more enthusiasm than sense, bless their cotton socks.

Handyman (Maybe Not So "Handy")

Handymen are great for little stuff – leaky faucets, light fixtures (as long as they don't become light you up). But a full remodel? Probably not. Kitchens and bathrooms need serious skill, actually **many journeyman trade skills** not just a rusty toolbox and a "can-do" attitude. Plus, many handymen lack insurance and licenses. Don't assume they know what they're doing just because they own a pickup truck and a hammer. That's like saying anyone with a McDonald's burger flipper is a chef.

General Contractor:

Contractors are the priciest - **upfront**, but often the safest, fastest and sometimes the cheapest over the long haul. A good one manages the whole shebang – permits, subs, ensuring code compliance. GCs are my general go-to recommendation for major remodels, unless you're a glutton for punishment.

Now, the kicker: Most homeowners have no clue what a contractor's proposal actually covers. They see the price tag, then call their therapist. But contractors manage teams, schedules, and a million behind-the-scenes details, and pay for the insurance you're going to claim contractor-caused property damages against (and actually get paid).

Some Price Comparisons:

Painting a 10x10 room: Handyman: \$200-\$500. Contractor: \$400-\$2000 (yes, TWO THOUSAND).

Leaky faucet: Handyman: \$100-\$200. Contractor: \$150-\$300.

Ceiling fan: Handyman: \$100-\$200. Contractor: \$200-\$400.

Hourly rates: Handyman: \$25-\$50. Contractor: \$50-\$150.

Remember: You get what you pay for. Usually. (More on that “usually” later.)

So, how are YOU going to remodel? That’s next. We’ll dissect each option, giving you the ammo to choose wisely.

Remodel vs. New Build



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Gain Insight On Your Build Choices*
- *How To Make Those “Sweet Spot” Choices*
- *Maximizing Your Outcome, Minimizing Risk*

Hey slick; you say “reMODEL”, I say “reBUILD”.

You think a remodel is just a fresh coat of paint and some new throw pillows? Bless your little heart. A major remodel, whether it's that dream kitchen, a new master suite, or a backyard “oasis” (aka a money pit), is a *rebuild*. Plain and simple. And you need to approach it that way, not with some HGTV-inspired delusions of 3-day makeover grandeur.

I've been building for 50 years and I've seen it all, from foundation cracks to shoddy wiring done by guys who earned their electrician certificate from YouTube video. I've pulled roofs off of houses just to raise ceilings a foot to completely change the space dynamics. Could I have just slapped on some new paint? Sure. But that's not how I roll. And it shouldn't be how you roll either, unless you like half-assed jobs and contractors who disappear mid-project.

See, most homeowners make the mistake of trying to save everything. They

Pages 29-31 Not Included in Sample

Red Tape, Permits, HOAs



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Learn Pros & Cons To Permits & HOA Approvals*
- *How Permits Ensure Safety And Compliance*
- *Using Permits To Screen Out Bad Contractors*

Hey peaches, what laws are meant to be broken?

You're itchin' to pull the trigger on that remodel, you have your financing lined up, maybe you have even picked out your dream tile. Stop the presses for a moment. Before you start knocking down walls or dream about sipping margaritas in your new backyard "oasis" (aka potential money pit), you've got to answer one important question, "Do I need permits or HOA approvals?"

I get it. You're thinking. **Permits? Building inspectors! HOA "cops"? Ugh, the bureaucracy!** But ignoring these things is like playing Russian roulette with your remodel. I've seen plenty of good projects get shut down halfway through – leaving homeowners with a half-finished kitchen, no contractor, and a mountain of debt – It's not a game you want to play, and it can cost you a small fortune in the long run.

Let's talk permits first. Not only do permits put your project under your city's microscope, permit fees can run from only \$50, to well into the thousands.

Pages 33-35 Not Included in Sample

Outdoor Remodels



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Outdoor Projects Require Special Attention*
- *Understand What To Include In Your Contracts*
- *Be A Prepared Pessimist; Plan For The Worst*

Parrot heads, don't screw up your Margaritaville!

Outdoor remodel projects require special considerations that interior remodels don't. Your dreams of sipping margaritas in your outdoor oasis could turn into slamming back a strong one on the edge of your back yard swamp.

Think about it – weather delays turning your project into a never-ending saga, material storage becoming a free-for-all for thieves, site access turning your yard into a mud pit, and nosy neighbors ready to complain about every swing of the hammer. And that's before you even consider the joys of hitting a gas line while digging for that “relaxing” pool.

I recently saw a Ring camera video posted by a neighbor showing two

lowlifes swiping contractor tools out of a carport at 1:00 am! Who's responsible for the loss of contractor's tools on your property? These are the kinds of nightmares you want to prevent - and that starts with your job specification.

This isn't a fluffy article for an outdoor living magazine. It's a survival manual. It's the ammunition you need to protect yourself from the vultures and ensure your project doesn't turn into a money pit. Because let's face it, remodeling is stressful enough without adding a bunch of unexpected outdoor calamities to the mix.

A well-defined contract is your best weapon. It's not just about pretty words and promises. It should try to anticipate every possible disaster and outline exactly how they'll be handled. This article gives you the crucial questions to ask, the red flags to watch out for, and the essential clauses to include in your agreement.

Don't wander into the outdoor remodeling jungle unarmed. Do your homework, be cynical, and be prepared to fight for your interests. You'll be much more likely to enjoy your new outdoor paradise without any nasty surprises. Enough pep talk - let's get down to business.

Outdoor Remodels: 15 Special Considerations

Keep in mind, not all these issues can be laid on your contractor. Some responsibility falls into your camp. Negotiate the details with your contractor, then chisel them into your agreement like you chiseled "Bob♥Mary" in that picnic table so long ago.

1. Weather Delays & Site Conditions

Issue: Unpredictable weather (rain, snow, high winds, extreme heat) can delay work, especially for projects involving excavation, concrete, or large structures.

Special Consideration: Specify how weather-related delays will be handled, including schedule adjustments and responsibility for site protection (e.g., covering open foundations or trenches).

2. Water Accumulation in Excavated Areas

Issue: Digging for pools, patios, or foundations may result in water

Pages 38-44 Not Included in Sample

Pre-Bid Specifications



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Improve Your 73% Probability Of Overruns*
- *Stop Tricky Contractors Cold In Their Tracks*
- *Take Control Of The Bidding Process*

Hey Slick - a remodel is more than pretty pictures!

It's an *engineering project*. You know you envision with that kitchen or bathroom remodel, or maybe that in-law suite addition to your house (because I know you can't wait to have your mother-in-law move in). But have you written it down in an "engineering-orderly" fashion?

Did you chart out your cabinets, appliances or materials in "Good-Better-Best" columns that will deliver your Sweet Spot remodel?

In black and white? In detail?

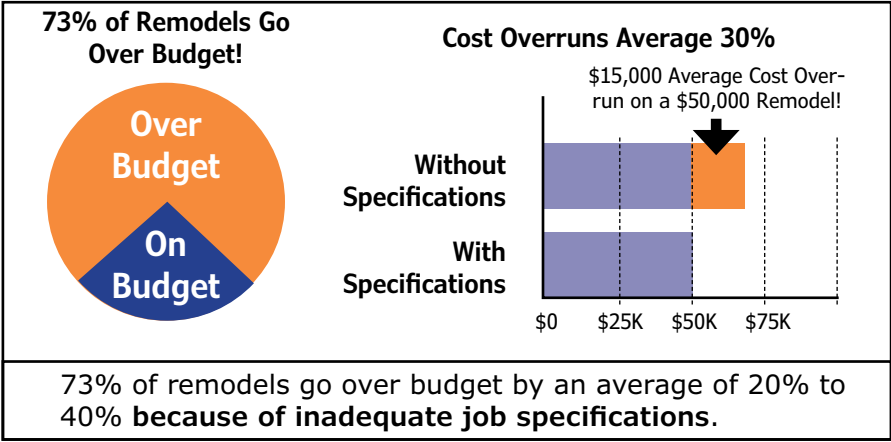
Yea, right. I should have known better than to ask, but I didn't write those earlier chapters to fill a few pages with some fluff. You **MUST** answer those questions now, because they are the map to your remodel.

They are the foundation for your **PRE-BID (must-have before you even *think* about calling a contractor) SPECIFICATION.**

What Exactly Is A Pre-Bid Specification? Well bless your heart, I thought you'd never ask!

To most contractors, architects or designers, it's a "blueprint" for the job. To YOU, it's much more!

Here's a fun fact: You have a 73% chance of busting your remodel budget by a whopping 30% if you don't start your with a solid specification.



So, I'll say it again ... and again. **The Pre-bid Specification the single most important starting point document that sets your remodel on the path to success.**

Clear?

In the next few chapters, I'm going to teach you the process of developing your own Pre-Bid Spec before you start calling contractors. You need them all to bid on the designs, materials and appliances that YOU want to buy, closing the door on contractors who want to buy what they're selling.

In other words, it's your version of an architect's blueprint, yet it still outlines the most important details that will ultimately define the terms and conditions that will be rolled into your construction contract. It's the document you will use to ensure that your multiple contractors are bidding on the same specifications (you DO have at least three contractors lined up to bid, right?).

It defines exactly what YOU expect from your remodel, down to the nitty-gritty details that would make even Martha Stewart proud.

Asking contractors to bid on your remodel without YOU specifying the details

is like ordering a “sandwich” at In-N-Out Burgers, thinking you were going to get a spicy chicken sandwich, but being served a hamburger.

First, **never, and I really do mean never, get only one bid** unless you like getting ripped off. Contractors are always trying to pull a fast one, hoping you’re too lazy to do your research, or pressuring you into “now” decisions to prevent you from “shopping their bid” to other contractors.

Next, since you’re going to get multiple bids, you need to make sure they are all bidding on the *same* specification - otherwise you will pull your hair out trying to compare the low price bid (their “builder’s grade” really means “cheap”) against the higher priced bid that accounts for premium quality materials.

One bid ends up being suspiciously low, the other is a budget-buster. But what you *really want* are the bids in between that all hit your Sweet Spot (Chapter 6). You want Apples to Apples bids. Period!

Now, if you’ve hired an architect or home designer to sketch out your remodel, pat yourself on the back. You’re *slightly* ahead of the game. But even these pricey blueprints don’t include many critical details that you need in your pre-bid specification. They’ll nail the design, but you’ll still need to fill in the blanks when it comes to project terms and conditions, family safety, and myriad details blueprints just don’t cover.

What I’m laying out here I charge clients hundreds of dollars to put together for them - and it’s worth every penny. But with research and patience, you will now create one yourself. Just remember, if you skip this step, you are basically handing your contractor a blank check.

So, here are the top five reasons why you absolutely must develop a pre-bid specification, in language even you can understand:

1. Prevents Cost Overruns: Remodels are notorious for going over budget. We’re talking an average of a 20-40% cost overrun! A pre-bid specification helps you nail down the scope and materials upfront, minimizing those nasty surprises. Think of it this way: on a \$100,000 kitchen remodel, a good spec sheet could save you \$20,000 to \$40,000. That’s enough for a new car. Or a really nice vacation to a *real* Margaritaville.

2. Protects Against Bait-and-Switch Tactics: Ever had a contractor

Pages 48 - 56 Not Included in Sample

Contractor Bid Reviews



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *See Who's Giving You What You Want*
- *Getting Into The Labor And Materials Weeds*
- *Look For The Red Flags*

Hey Buyer, Wadda-my-bid, do I hear \$10-5 - \$10-6?

Hey Kids - Now the "easy" part (unless you skipped class on the last two chapters)

P. T. Barnum proved long ago that there's a "sucker born every minute" - he took advantage of that and made a small fortune. Contractors love suckers - don't be one of them.

Let's be real, they're in this game to make bank, and some will happily play fast and loose with your budget to do it. That's where the Bid Review comes in - your essential weapon against contractor shenanigans.

Think of it like this: your pre-bid spec (which you did create, right? No? Go back and do that NOW, seriously) is *your* play book. The bid review is where you

check if they're actually playing by *your* rules, or just making stuff up as they go.

This ain't a casual glance. We're talking full-on forensic analysis of every line item, scrutinizing the fine print like it's a treasure map, and comparing it all to that pre-bid spec you (hopefully) created. Because without a bid review, you're basically handing them a blank check and hoping for the best. Spoiler alert: the "best" is probably not what you're gonna get.

Why is this so damn important? Because some contractors are sneaky bottom-feeders, and this is how you expose them. Hidden costs? Swapped-out materials? Jargon that would make a sailor blush? A proper bid review shines a floodlight on all that BS before you're stuck with it.

I offer Bid Reviews as one of my homeowner services (hey kids, my dog has to eat). But armed with the guidance in Trusted Remodel Advisor, you can totally do this yourself. Just like a doctor appreciates an informed patient, I appreciate homeowners who aren't afraid to get their hands dirty. So, grab your magnifying glass, put on your detective hat, and let's dive into the nitty-gritty of bid reviews. This laundry list is your starting point – use it wisely.

And remember, I'm at www.trustedremodeladvisor.com if you need a fast second opinion.

Price Comparison (see which contractor comes closest to your Sweet Spot):

1. Accuracy & Completeness: Contractors "forget" things. Like debris removal or those fancy doorknobs you picked. A review catches these "oops" moments, ensuring the bid covers everything.
2. Hidden Markups: Contractors need profit, fine. But some get greedy. Inflated materials, bogus labor charges – a review exposes these money grabs.
3. Material Swaps: You want granite, not some cheap knockoff. A review ensures you get what you specified, not what the contractor "had lying around."
4. Predatory Contracts: Contracts are legally binding. Some are also designed to screw you over. A review decodes the fine print, protecting your interests.

5. Apples-to-Apples: You will die an early death if you try comparing proposals bidding on different specs? A review ensures everyone's bidding on the same project details – *your project*.

Beyond price, here's what to scrutinize:

6. Licenses/Credentials: Verify everything. Don't want some unlicensed yahoo falling off your roof.
7. Material Specs: Demand brands, model numbers, everything. No vague descriptions!
8. Insurance: General liability and workers' comp are musts. Don't assume your insurance covers contractor screw-ups.
9. Payment Terms: Never pay upfront! Tie payments to milestones.
10. Schedule: Don't let them drag it out. Time is money, especially if you're bank financing your remodel. Get a firm schedule and hold them to it.
11. Line-Item Breakdown: No lump sums! Demand a detailed breakdown of all costs. *Warning - most contractors will do everything they can to avoid giving you this level of detail.*
12. Warranties: Written warranties for materials and workmanship.
13. Material Quality: "Granite" isn't always "granite." Do your research!
14. Contractor's Warranty: How long do they stand behind their work?
15. Punch List Holdback: Withhold a chunk of cash until everything is perfect.

And one last, crucial question: *Do you have a criminal record I need to know about?* Yep, ask about it or run your own background check before hiring. Remember my introduction on Safety? Here's how you double down on keeping your family and wallet safe.

So there you have it. Bid reviews are essential. Skip it, and you're asking for trouble. Now go forth and be a smart homeowner, and don't get fleeced by a slippery contractor.

Negotiate Everything



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Discuss line items openly and honestly*
- *Try Different Options To Hit Your Sweet Spot*
- *Special HOW TO SAVE THOUSANDS Section*

Hey, Walmart Shopper! Ever ask for a discount?

Here's a genius thought: every contractor is on a mission to make as much money as possible, and every remodeling homeowner is on a mission to pay the least possible.

Since the last honest carpenter walked the Earth in sandals about 2,000 years ago, every contractor has padded their bids - some a teeny bit, but some bids so inflated, you'd swear you're dealing with the Pillsbury Dough Boy. So, for the sake of this chapter, assume that every bid you receive is padded with extra dollars, and your job is to pull out some padding.

But remember, don't disclose your budget until the final price push. All of your leverage flies out the window if you disclose what you're willing to pay too early.

Negotiating with a contractor sounds as fun as dropping an anvil on your foot. But trust me, it's not as scary as it seems. Especially if you've done your homework: you KNOW your pre-bid specification, and you know your remodeling Sweet Spot. Now it's a matter of discussing cost line items.

But first, let me give you a caveat on negotiating bids. If you owned one of those Florida homes in a neighborhood that got swept away in the last hurricane, you may be in a "seller's market" where the contractor has so many potential jobs at high profit. Unfortunately, markets with high construction demand mean that bids may be higher than the national average, and fewer contractors will be inclined to waste time negotiating when another homeowner will pay their asking price.

You can do some research WITH CAUTION using a variety of online resources. Google "Remodeling Calculator" to find local cost guides for various home projects, but use these resources as very rough guidelines. For what it's worth, I found few, if any, that even come close to the real remodeling costs in my area, but it's a worthwhile exercise to learn more about materials to labor cost ratios, "average" kitchen remodeling costs. however, none of these online tools I found tell you if the "average" kitchen remodel is based on using good, better, or best materials.

Let's say you've found a contractor you kind of like. He seems to grasp your vision (or at least nods convincingly when you talk about "rustic farmhouse chic"), his schedule aligns with your plans, and even your dog gives him the tail wag of semi-approval. But his bid is 10% higher than the other contractors who left you a little uncomfortable for one reason or another.

Don't freak out, and don't just accept his bid and resign yourself to eating Ramen noodles for the next year to make up for over-paying. Only YOU know your budget, so start picking apart line item costs to get you back to budget. Play hardball, but be nice.

Here's one way you approach a negotiation, without getting your feelings hurt when they look at you like you're crazy:

How to Communicate with the Contractor (aka How to Flatter and Manipulate):

- Express Genuine Appreciation: Start by buttering them up. Tell them

Pages 62 - 63 Not Included in Sample

Extraordinary Savings Tips

Shop smart. Save \$10,000 or more on your remodel!

If you're having trouble arriving at your "Sweet Spot" with your contractor, consider taking some product or material purchases off his list, and adding them to *yours*. If you're still \$2,500 over your Sweet Spot after discussing every option with your contractor, you could tackle that savings target (possibly a lot more) by taking over direct purchasing of the big ticket items, like your high end appliances.

Think of it this way: your contractor's bid has figured in typical pricing for the big ticket items you've specified - he'll simply send your list to local suppliers for contractor's pricing, and mark those prices up 15% to cover his labor and mileage costs for getting them to your job site. His job is to price fairly, and deliver your remodel on time. His job is NOT to spend time bargain-hunting.

So, instead of binge-watching the latest season of your favorite TV series, spend *your* time to knock \$5,000, \$10,000 or more off of your total remodeling costs - and hit your sweet spot on-budget.

Here are some of the top tips allowing you to save some serious cash on materials and products needed for your remodel - without sacrificing quality:

1. Shop Online Aggressively

Contractors often buy at big-box stores like Lowe's or Home Depot at their contractor rate, then mark up the price 15% or more before passing the cost on to you. Instead, hop on your computer and you can frequently find the same or nearly identical item for less than retail - sometimes as much as 30% less than what your contractor has to charge. In other words, creative shopping could save you \$150 on a \$500 light fixture.

2. Leverage Big-Box Discounts & New Credit Card Deals

Home Depot, Lowe's, Menards, Ace Hardware, and many other retailers offer promotions like 20% off your first purchase if you open a new store credit card.

Pages 65 - 78 Not Included in Sample

Handyman V Contractor



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- Recognize Skill Limitations Of Handymen
- Learn Legal Risks Of Hiring A Handyman
- Consider “GC” Value, Not Just Costs

Howdy Neighbor, don't trust a neighbor.

This is going to trigger some of you.

Being brutally honest, most of the well-meaning folks doling out contractor recommendations on Nextdoor or Facebook wouldn't know a good contractor from an avocado. Sure, your neighbor Brenda might be thrilled with the guy who “remodeled” her bathroom, but does she know if the plumbing is up to code? Did her handyman use quality materials, or just use some other contractor's cheap leftovers he bought on Craigslist?

These glowing reviews are often based on superficial impressions – the contractor showed up on time, was polite, and didn't leave a huge mess (initially), and the “affordable” project “looks great”. That doesn't mean their recommended contractor is qualified to handle YOUR unique and precious

Pages 80 - 83 Not Included in Sample

Contractor Red Flags



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Start With Clear and Concise Contracts*
- *Be Vigilant, Investigate Your Suspicions*
- *Verify Credentials, Use 3rd Party Inspectors*

Hey Crash, red flags aren't just for road construction!

There are more tricks that contractors can use on every remodeling job than there are LEGO® blocks at LEGOLAND®. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to look past the contractor's fancy logo and low-priced quote to spot the hidden red flags that should give you pause. Because trust me, some of these guys are about as trustworthy as a politician's promise.

You can't even trust TV celebrity remodelers! Take Charles "Todd" Hill, a former HGTV star from the show "Flip It to Win It," was convicted in 2023 of multiple fraud schemes and grand theft against 11 victims.

Home remodeling and repair projects often represent significant investments, but homeowners frequently face overcharging by contractors,

leading to inflated costs and unmet expectations. Reports show that over 50% of homeowners have negative experiences with remodels, often linked to overcharging tactics. Additionally, 78% of homeowners exceed their budget during renovations, with 44% going over by at least \$5,000 and 35% by \$10,000 or more. Among those hiring contractors, 53% report budget overruns compared to 42% of DIY renovators.

I'll start by highlighting some of the more common scams to look for, but then I'll wrap them all up in a more comprehensive red flag list.

► **Upfront Payment Scams (aka The Get-Rich-Quicker Scheme):**

Many contractors demand a large percentage (30-50%) of the project cost upfront, claiming it's for materials or equipment. Once paid, they might disappear entirely or deliver subpar work, leaving homeowners at a loss. They may even be using your up-front cash to buy materials for a different project! In my practice, I review every proposal and make recommendations to homeowners on payment schedules that give them better protection against this type of scam. Don't let them take the money and run, leaving you with nothing but a hole in your wallet and a half-finished project.

► **Vague or Undefined Payment Milestones:**

Without clear milestones for payments, there's no accountability for work progress, which could result in payments for work not done or disputes over what constitutes project completion. How do you know when you're supposed to pay them if you haven't agreed on what "done" looks like?

► **Payment Before Inspections:**

Paying for work before it's inspected ensures there's no verification of quality or compliance with building codes, leaving homeowners vulnerable to substandard work. Don't pay until the inspector signs off. Otherwise, you might be paying for a code violation.

► **No Written Change Order Process:**

Without a formal process for changes, homeowners might face unexpected

Pages 86 - 90 Not Included in Sample



Background Checks



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Remodel Dreams Cause You To Ignore Safety*
- *Trust ... But Verify*
- *Add Background Checks To Your Pre-Bid Spec*

Hey Mr. Nice Guy, Not everyone else is!

You're about to enter some dark corners of the construction industry. You already know that I don't spew BS; I write short, direct, and factual (sometimes anecdotal) stuff. But now I'm being deadly serious – pay attention.

This isn't about fear-mongering; it's about facing a harsh realities of the world today. Financial loss is recoverable. Recovering from a lousy, sub-standard remodel is recoverable, costly but recoverable. A contractor breaching the security and physical safety of you and your family may not be recoverable. This is about the safety of your family, and that's not something to take lightly.

Total Family Safety is rarely (if ever) a topic of discussion in the context of a remodel. You're about to let a stranger into your home, where your family lives, sleeps, and keeps its prized possessions. Are you just going to trust your gut

feeling about this person? Hello! Your gut feeling might be dead wrong. We're talking about the space where your children play, where you keep your most valuable belongings, where you should feel the most secure.

The safety risk associated with your remodel goes beyond just considering the contractor's bid price. It's about protecting your family from potential harm. And I'm not just talking about shoddy wiring or collapsing decks. I'm talking about the people you're letting into your life. Because a charming smile and a low bid don't guarantee a person's character.

When considering a home remodeling project, it's easy to be charmed by a contractor's smooth sales pitch or tempted by a low construction bid. And let's face it, finding these contractors is easier than ever, right? Craigslist, Angi, Thumbtack, Facebook, Nextdoor... they're all teeming with "qualified professionals" boasting "XX years of experience." They'll tell you about their dedication to quality, their commitment to customer satisfaction, and maybe even mention their involvement in the local community (because who wouldn't trust a contractor who volunteers at the soup kitchen?). But here's the harsh truth: none of these platforms disclose criminal history. For obvious reasons. And don't think that just because someone is a local church minister doing construction on the side (because last Sunday's collection plate was light) that they're automatically trustworthy either.

There *are* bad actors out there despite being charmingly convincing, but they're still bad actors. And they can hide in plain sight, even behind a shiny new F-150 and a veneer of respectability.

This is the #1 reason that I now offer all homeowners a contractor-focused background check on my www.trustedremodeladvisor.com website.

Real Data And Case Studies Highlighting The Risks (aka This Isn't Fear Mongering):

A Rand Organization report showed that approximately 3.4% of small construction business owners have some form of criminal history, with 0.82% having a felony record (slightly higher than the average prevalence across all industries). The data also shows that **37% of their construction workers have a criminal record.**

Let that sink in for a minute!

Pages 93 -94 Not Included in Sample



Hey Trekkie, “Cash” is the ultimate Shape-shifter.

Remodeling costs way more than the contractor’s bid. Taxes go up, so be ready. Never pay upfront; tie payments to milestones. Insurance? Check yours and theirs. Banks have rules, so play nice. “Oops, a surprise” means “more money,” so have a contingency. Don’t overspend unless you’re staying put; gold toilets aren’t always a good investment. Tax write-offs? Maybe. Ask a pro. Hidden costs? Utilities, housing, storage, your time. Pre-lien notices? Not junk mail. Contractor nightmares are real.

Payment terms are key. Vague schedules are a disaster. Question everything. Get it in writing. Change orders? Written approval only. Milestone payments are best. Bank loans? They have rules. Negotiate terms that protect you.

Overruns happen. It’s not always the contractor. Scope creep, champagne taste, indecision – you could be the problem. Be realistic, finalize designs, communicate. Contractors can be shady: lowball bids, vague contracts, bad management. Get it in writing. Three rules: pre-bid spec, quotes on specs, ironclad contract. Hidden costs? Rework, waste, fines, delays, lost income, bad work, safety, legal, stress. Do your homework. A smooth remodel starts with you being informed.

Pages 96 - 104 Not Included in Sample

Top 16 Budget-Busters



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *YOU Are In Charge, Not The Contractor*
- *The Odds Are Overwhelmingly Against You*
- *It's What You Don't Know That Will Sink You*

Hey Mr. Finger-pointer, maybe blame yourself!

And let's be clear, that budget blowouts aren't always pinned on a "bad contractor." More often than not, it's about you – your lack of knowledge, your oversight, your failure to manage the process effectively. Even the best contractor can't save you from yourself if you don't know what you're doing.

But the advice I share in this chapter could be your remodel budget life preserver.

You have your bid, you have your contractor, and everything looks like it will be on budget, so time to kick off that dream remodel, right? Wrong. Brace yourself – if you're the average home-owner doing a remodel, you only have a 22% chance of bringing that dream home within budget. Remember, 78% of remodels end up with overruns. These unplanned cost overruns don't magically appear; they're a direct result of poor planning, vague specifications, and a

lack of homeowner involvement. You can blame the contractor all you want, but often, the real culprit is staring back at you in the mirror.

For instance, ambiguous specifications (on your part) can lead to unexpected rework, sometimes adding 10–20% to the overall budget (HomeAdvisor, 2023). Did you clearly define what kind of tile you wanted? Did you specify the brand and model of the appliances? Or did you just say “something nice”? Because “something nice” can cost you a fortune. Inadequate bids and poorly defined contract terms (that you signed) can mask issues like material waste or permit mishaps, with fines averaging \$500 per day in some cases (Angi, 2022). Did you read the fine print? Did you understand the payment schedule? Or did you just assume everything would be fine? Assumptions are the mother of all remodeling screw-ups.

Other hidden costs include delays that prolong labor charges and missed deadlines that disrupt daily life, not to mention potential safety hazards and the diminished resale value of subpar workman-ship. Every overlooked detail – every “I didn’t think about that” moment – can spiral into substantial financial setbacks. And these setbacks are rarely the contractor’s fault. They’re a result of your failure to plan, specify, and manage the project effectively. This stark reality underscores the absolute necessity for detailed project specifications, comprehensive bids, and airtight contract terms from the start. And guess who’s responsible for ensuring those things are in place? That’s right, you are.

By clearly defining the scope of work, payment schedules, and responsibilities, homeowners can better anticipate and mitigate these hidden costs. For further insights on preventing budget blow-outs, revisit the earlier sections of this chapter, where essential strategies like contractor interviews, licensing verifications, and project management practices are discussed in depth. Consider this your wake-up call. You’re not just hiring a contractor; you’re managing a project. And if you’re not up to the task, be prepared to pay the price.

Here are some of the hidden costs you need to discuss with your potential contractor, and get them included in the initial estimates, proposals, and contractor agreements. But more importantly, these are the details you need to be on top of.

Here are some of the hidden costs you need to discuss with your potential

contractor, and get them included in the initial estimates, proposals, and contractor agreements. Don't let them tell you "we'll take care of that later." "Later" usually translates to "more money out of your pocket."

Often, you're the one holding the shovel that digs you into a financial hole. This isn't about blaming you; it's about empowering you to take control. So listen up, because this advice is your remodel budget's best friend.

78% of remodels end up with cost overruns. Those extra expenses don't just materialize out of thin air. They're a direct result of poor planning, vague specifications, and a lack of homeowner involvement.

Here are the top four categories where budget-busters hide:

1. Financial Costs (aka Where Your Money Goes to Die):

- **Rework and Corrections:** Poor workmanship can necessitate redoing work, which may add an extra 10–20% to the overall remodel budget. For example, on a \$50,000 project, re-work expenses could easily reach an additional \$5,000–\$10,000 (HomeAdvisor, 2023). That's like flushing money down the toilet.
- **Increased Material Costs:** Substandard materials or waste due to mistakes often require last-minute, premium-priced replacements, unexpectedly driving up costs. Did they "accidentally" order the wrong size tiles? Guess who's paying for the rush delivery of the correct ones?
- **Unplanned Permit Fees and Fines:** Skipping proper permits can result in fines averaging \$500 or more per day – that YOU pay. In some cases, cumulative penalties have reached several thousand dollars when work is halted by building inspectors (Angi, 2022). Ignoring permits is like playing Russian roulette with your wallet.

2. Time Costs (aka Time is Money, Honey):

- **Project Delays:** Mismanagement or shoddy work can extend project timelines considerably. These delays not only prolong the inconvenience but may also incur additional labor charges and storage fees for materials. Are they "working on it" or are they

Pages 108 - 122 Not Included in Sample

The Punch List



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *The Punch List Is Your Final Payment Leverage*
- *A Walkthrough & Walk Around Are Essential*
- *Post-remodeling Safety Considerations*

Hey Rocky, it's not that kind of a punch list!

Look, a punch list isn't just a formality. It's your leverage. It's that 10% to 15% holdback that you wrote into the payment section of your contractor's agreement ... *right*? That final payment is your job completion insurance (or funds that will pay another contractor to come in and complete all of the remaining fixes and tweaks if your existing contractor walks off into the wild blue).

The "Punch List" The punch list is your final quality control check, your last chance to ensure you get what you paid for. It's a detailed list of everything that needs to be fixed, finished, or tweaked before you sign off on the job and release that final payment.

I know that you probably "inspected" each phase of the job as it was completed - you checked the newly painted walls after painting, and you checked all of the cabinets during installation. So why go through it all again

at the end? Accidents happen - so in your final walkthrough you'll look for dents in that newly painted drywall or scratches on your cabinets that the contractor made when moving in your new dishwasher. It's not the "check off as completed" that matters, it's the *final* check that guarantees satisfaction with the job as your contractor walks out the door for the last time.

A well-executed punch list protects your investment. It ensures that all the agreed-upon work is completed to the expected standard, preventing you from being stuck with subpar craftsmanship or unfinished details.

Two Non-Negotiable Items for EVERY Punch List

There are two things that absolutely **MUST** be on every punch list, regardless of the project:

- 1. Complete Job Folder from the Contractor:** This isn't just a collection of receipts. It's a comprehensive record of the entire project, including:
 - Copies of all contracts, change orders, and payment records.
 - Building permits (if applicable) and final inspection approvals.
 - Contractor's written warranties for labor and materials.
 - Original owner's manuals, installation guides, and warranties for all new products.

Don't let the contractor fob you off with a shoebox full of loose papers. Demand a well-organized folder.
- 2. Final Building Permit Sign-Offs (If Permits Were Pulled):** Don't assume everything is up to code just because the contractor says so. Get the official sign-off from the local building department. This officially closes out your project with your city or county, and ensures the work meets all safety standards.

Final Walkthrough and Payment Hold

Here's what a walkthrough looks like: you and your contractor go room by room, cabinet by cabinet, appliance by appliance, item by item, checking off each punch list item as it's completed.

Pages 125 - 129 Not Included in Sample

Top 25 Disruptions During A Remodel



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Understand What You're Walking Into*
- *Begin Planning For Disruptions*
- *Add Contract Terms To Minimize Disruption*

Hey Griswold, welcome to stay-at-home camping!

If your wild imagination is being influenced by some various consumed substances, then you might be envisioning living in a house with the smell of freshly cut pine lumber and having to use that outhouse as being on the perfect mountain camping trip.

Snap out of it - your reality is about to be the temporary state of controlled chaos. But "temporary" can feel like an eternity if you're not prepared. This upheaval impacts not just us adults, but also the kids who might find their routines for schoolwork, play, and sleep thrown into disarray.

Pets, too, can be significantly affected, experiencing stress from the unusual activity, noise, and changes in their environment, which might manifest in behavioral changes or health issues. And if you work from home? Forget about

it. Construction noise, Internet outages, power flickers – your productivity is going to take a hit.

Here are my Top 25 Lifestyle Impacts from a Home Remodel.

Consider the list as your “advance planning map” so you can start taking steps to mitigate those items that you think are particularly disruptive (but never really considered it popped up on this list).

1. **Dust Contamination Throughout the Home:** Think your house is clean? Think again. Construction dust infiltrates every nook and cranny, coating surfaces, clogging air filters, and triggering allergies.
2. **Overwhelming Construction Noise:** Jackhammers, saws, drills, nail guns – it’s a symphony of construction cacophony. Forget about peaceful relaxation or focused work. Noise-canceling headphones will become your new best friend.
3. **Limited or No Kitchen Access:** No kitchen means no home-cooked meals. Prepare for a steady diet of takeout, microwave meals, and restaurant dinners. Your grocery bill will skyrocket, and your waistline might expand.
4. **Limited or No Bathroom Access:** Sharing a bathroom with the entire family (and maybe even the construction crew) is a recipe for disaster. Morning routines become a chaotic free-for-all, and personal hygiene might take a backseat.
5. **Extreme Temperature Swings Due to Open Walls:** Open walls and missing windows mean drafts, temperature fluctuations, and discomfort. Your heating and cooling bills will go up, and you’ll be constantly adjusting the thermostat.
6. **Living in a Messy, Half-Done Home:** Construction debris, exposed wiring, and unfinished walls create a chaotic and stressful environment. You’ll feel like you’re living in a perpetual construction zone (because you are).
7. **Increased Safety Hazards for Kids & Pets:** Construction sites are inherently dangerous. Nails, tools, and debris pose a safety risk for curious kids and pets. Walk your construction zone each morning, being extra vigilant about correcting potential hazards to prevent accidents.

Pages 132 - 138 Not Included in Sample

Contract Stipulations



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Contracts Go Beyond Material & Labor Details*
- *Contract Terms Can Lessen Lifestyle Disruptions*
- *Focus On Provisions Addressing The Big Issues*

“Fency” That, pet protection can be written into a remodeling contract!

Remodeling’s a messy business – dust, noise, the whole shebang. So, before you sign that contract (and yes, you are getting a contract, right?), think beyond the pretty finishes and consider the nitty-gritty of living through a construction zone. Contractors have their standard spiel, but your life isn’t standard. Dog-dad? Bark about preventing pets from accessing toxic chemicals. Single mom? Privacy and safety are your jam. Work-from-home warriors? Minimize the racket, maximize the productivity. The key is to get your specific needs in writing, in the contract.

I’m no lawyer (and you should consult one before signing anything), but I’ve survived enough remodels to know what matters. Don’t overwhelm the contractor with a laundry list of pedantic demands; focus on the biggest

Pages 140 - 141 Not Included in Sample

leaks, and remove oil leak stains if they occur.”

10. Increased Cleaning Needs: Construction creates extra cleaning. Clarify responsibilities.

- Suggested Clause: “Contractor will include a comprehensive clean-up at the end of each workday to manage construction-related dirt and debris, leaving the work area in a reasonably clean and organized condition. A final cleaning will be performed upon completion of the project.”

11. Privacy Invasion from Workers in the Home: Your home is your sanctuary. Protect your privacy.

- Suggested Clause: “Contractor shall respect the homeowner’s privacy and ensure that workers access only designated work areas. Workers will be professional and courteous at all times. No smoking in the house, and no beer or other alcoholic beverages on the property.”

These contract stipulations (or others that address specific concerns arising directly or indirectly from the remodeling itself) aim to ensure the contractor takes responsibility for minimizing disruptions, providing material benefits to you in terms of comfort, safety, and daily living conditions during the remodel. R

Once again, a well-defined contract is your best defense against unexpected problems and costly disputes, but now a friend to minimize lifestyle disruptions. Don’t be afraid to ask for what you need to protect your family and your home.

And for heaven’s sake, get a lawyer to review it before you sign (because what happens if the contractor leaves that protective fencing open and your child gets hurt while playing on the lumber?).

Remodeling With Pets



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Create New Pet Rules During A Remodel*
- *Contractor Agreement Terms To Protect Pets*
- *Keep Vet & Poison Control Numbers Handy*

Hey Pet Parents, protect your “kids”!

I’m your Trusted Remodel Advisor, but I’ve also been a “dog dad” for over a half-century. I’ve rescued them, bred them, trained them, and spent a lifetime learning how to keep them safe, even through dusty, noisy construction projects. Pay special attention - you’re about to remodel with pets in the house.

While you’re busy picking out granite countertops, Fluffy and Fido are experiencing a full-blown home invasion. And trust me, their anxiety is not going to improve your project timeline. Remodeling is stressful for everyone, including our furry family members, so let’s talk about how to keep them safe and sane during the chaos.

Nobody knows your pets better than you and your veterinarian. However, pet safety and care is often an afterthought when planning a remodel. Remember, they are family, so the same care should be taken to ensure their safety and care as you would for your toddlers.




I'm laying out some tried and true considerations, but also check in with your veterinarian to discuss any additional measures you may take to ensure proper safety, care and treatment of severe dust allergy conditions, anxiety or aggressive behaviors that a remodeling project may create or exacerbate.

When you and the contractor are lock-jawed on whether the refrigerator should have a water and ice dispenser in the door, your dog is out back chewing on a toxic tube of construction adhesive! Pet protection is rarely a primary remodel discussion item, but it should be. In certain circumstances, you will want to consider adding specific terms to your contractor's agreement. For instance, if your dogs *must* use the back yard to pee and poo, and the contractor is using the back yard to stage that construction adhesive, paint, concrete or other building materials, include a temporary fencing provision in your agreement. And budget for it!

Here's list of many pet-related considerations and mitigation strategies to take into account prior to and during a remodel, but you know your pet's living situation, quirks and fears better than anyone, so make time to really carve out your remodeling plan to protect your pets.

Keep in mind, the *solutions* provided in the list below are ultimately *your responsibility*, however, your contractor may play a key roll in implementing some of these solutions; I use the example again that you may require your contractor to install temporary fencing around dangerous building materials, or install an automatic gate closer on that back gate.

1. All Kinds Of Unexpected Things Can And Will Happen To Pets During A Remodel:

- Why It Matters: You can't plan for what you don't know.
- Solution:
 -  Schedule a visit with your vet before the remodel starts, and get recommendations on how to best manage you pet once hell breaks loose.
 -  Paste up your Vet's emergency phone number in a few conspicuous places - at the ready for you or your contractors if issues arise when you're not there.
 -  Paste up YOUR phone number in the work area. Most

times, sub-contractors working on site will not have the homeowner's phone number - you want that call anytime there's a pet issue when you're not home.

- 🔑 Paste up the 24-hour pet poison control center number, and contact them if your pets encounter toxic materials or substances. For ready reference, the ASPCA 24/7 Poison Control Hotline is 888-426-4435, and the Pet Poison Helpline at 855-764-7661.

2. Escape Risk Through Open Doors & Gates:

- Why It Matters: Open doors and gates are the #1 escape risk for pets during a remodel.
- Solution:
 - 🔑 Keep pets in a closed, secure room with a prominent sign reminding workers to keep the door shut.
 - 🔑 Use double-door or double-gate systems to create a buffer zone, especially near exits.
 - 🔑 Ensure your pet is microchipped and has a collar with up-to-date information.
 - 🔑 Buy and install a tracking device on you pet's collar - they connect wirelessly to your smart phone, and let you quickly find a lost pet.
- Product Recommendations:

Trackers: Apple AirTag, or Google these brands of tracking collars: Whistle, FitBark, Fi

Gates: Carlson Extra Tall Pet Gate – it's sturdy and will keep even the most determined escape artists contained.

3. Increased Anxiety & Stress from Noise and Disruptions:

- Why It Matters: Construction noise can cause severe anxiety in pets.
- Solution:
 - 🔑 Create a quiet retreat space in a closed-off room away from the construction.

Pages 146 - 156 Not Included in Sample

Remodel Warranties



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *New Products Fail - Get Warranties*
- *Contractor's New Work Fails - Get Warranties*
- *Get Your Warranty Binder Before Final Payment*

Hey Silly - even new stuff breaks!

Yeah, I know, contracts and warranties – the fine print that makes your eyes glaze over. But trust me, when things go south (and in the remodeling world, they often do), warranties are your best friend.

You see, when you remodel your home, you're not just buying new stuff; you're buying peace of mind. And that peace of mind comes in the form of warranties. Now, there are two types of warranties you need to know about: the contractor's warranty and the manufacturer's warranty. Think of it like this: the contractor warranties their work, and the manufacturer warranties the stuff.

Let's start with the **contractor's warranty**. This is where the rubber meets the road. Your contractor is basically saying, "I guarantee my work is top-notch, and if it's not, I'll fix it." This warranty covers things like installation errors,

faulty workmanship, and anything else that's directly related to the contractor's work. A good contractor will offer a reasonable warranty, usually for at least a year, sometimes longer. **And get this in writing, people!** Don't rely on some handshake agreement. A written warranty is your proof that the contractor is standing behind their work.

Then you've got the **manufacturer's warranty**. This covers the actual products – your new appliances, your fancy faucets, your designer tiles. 1 Each manufacturer has its own warranty, and they can vary wildly. Some cover just a year, others offer lifetime warranties. This warranty protects you from defects in the product itself – a faulty dishwasher, a cracked tile, a leaky faucet.

Now, here's where things get interesting. You need both warranties to be fully protected. Let's say your new dishwasher dies after six months. If it's a manufacturer's defect, the manufacturer will cover it. But if it's because the contractor installed it wrong, that's on them. That's why it's crucial to have both warranties in place.

So, how do you keep track of all these warranties?

During the final walkthrough, demand that your contractor provide you with a complete folder at the end of the job, containing all the warranty documents for every product they installed, along with their own warranty information. This folder should be your bible, your go-to guide if anything goes wrong. Keep it in a safe place, and for the love of all that is holy, actually read it!

Do yourself a favor and pay attention to this stuff. It's not just about protecting your investment; it's about protecting your sanity. Because when things go wrong, you don't want to be caught with your pants down. You want to be able to pull out that warranty folder and say, "I'm covered, baby!"

Let's look at some details:

1. The Contractor's Workmanship Warranty

This is the warranty your contractor provides to guarantee the quality of their work—things like framing, drywall, tile installation, plumbing, electrical work, and more. **Even if you're signed off on the final punch list, some problems don't show themselves for some time after the remodel is done.** For instance, you won't know if the new roof leaks until it rains, or you won't

Pages 159 - 167 Not Included in Sample

Movin' On In



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *You've Budgeted For Furnishings*
- *Buy "Sweet Spot" Good-Better-Best Furnishings*
- *Deal-shop, Be Patient, Decorate Over Time*

Hey Yogi - it ain't over till it's over,

Listen up, design divas, because your Trusted Remodel Advisor is about to drop some truth bombs about the final frontier of remodeling: furnishings. Yes, you've survived the dust, the delays, and the contractor's questionable fashion choices. But don't think you're done yet, buttercup. Because now comes the fun part: turning this construction zone into a stylish sanctuary. And let me tell you, this is where you can drop a *lot* of coin, real fast.

You see, most homeowners treat furnishings like an afterthought. They blow their entire budget on the remodel itself, and come up short on being able to upgrade furnishings and accessories.

Their solution? Furnish the gorgeous remodel with the same tired, worn-out furniture they bought on Craigslist five years ago, the stuff they were planning to replace before the remodel even started.

Don't be "remodel rich, but furnishings poor".

Furnishings are the soul of your remodel. They're what bring the space to life and make it feel like your home, not a page out of a generic design catalog. So, if you want to do it right, you need to plan ahead and budget accordingly.

Now, I'm not saying you need to deck the halls with solid gold furniture and diamond-encrusted throw pillows. But you do need to invest in quality pieces that will stand the test of time (and toddlers). So, let's take a peek at some upper-mid-grade options for different spaces, shall we?

The Kitchen Remodel: Time to Ditch the Worn-Out Barstools and Ugly Mats

Your kitchen is now a chef's paradise, but if you're still using the same scratched-up chairs and chipped plates, we have a problem. Here's what to upgrade so your kitchen actually looks finished:

Seating That Doesn't Scream "Hand-Me-Down"

- **Counter & Bar Stools:** You need something sleek, comfy, and durable. Try the West Elm Slope Leather Counter Stool (\$399 each)—modern, elegant, and wipes clean easily (because let's be honest, spills will happen).
- **Dining Chairs:** If your remodel included a dining nook, upgrade to something substantial like the CB2 Vero Black Dining Chair (\$299 each)—a mix of wood and cushioned seating for that perfect blend of modern and warm.

Rugs That Can Handle Spills & Foot Traffic

- **Ruggable Washable Kitchen Runner (\$149+) –** Because you will spill marinara at some point. This one is stylish and machine-washable—game changer.

New Dinnerware & Glassware (So You Don't Serve Guests on Your College Set)

- **Our Place "Main Plates" (\$50 for 4) –** Minimalist, high-quality, and actually dishwasher-safe.
- **Schott Zwiesel Forte Stemware Set (\$69 for 6) –** Because your new kitchen deserves wine glasses that don't feel like they came from a frat house.

Pages 169 - 173 Not Included in Sample

About The Author

[Contact The Author](#)

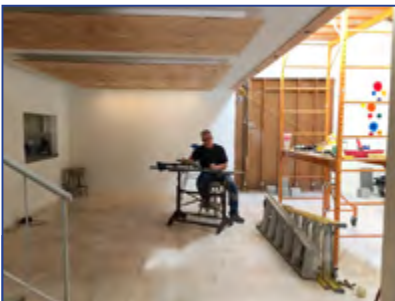
Andy Gibbs, being the son of an engineer-builder, was already swinging a hammer by the time we was 5 - and he hasn't slowed down during the more than 65 years since.

As a 20 year old Army medic, he took a side job building roof trusses, and by 21, along with some fellow first responders, started a flourishing home remodeling business in central Texas.



He received his Bachelors of Architectural Engineering after military service, and earned his MBA shortly thereafter. He later served as the President of the American Institute of Building Design (San Francisco Chapter), and was responsible for the design and construction oversight for over 100 Bay Area residential and commercial construction projects. He also authored new building standards codified in the Uniform Fire Code (now NFPA).

Mr. Gibbs is considered a contemporary polymath, a construction expert, inventor (over 50 patents), an architectural engineer, international speaker and prolific author of highly technical publications and white papers on software, medical and fitness products, and artificial intelligence, and is peer-ranked as a World's Top 300 intellectual Property Strategist. He is also a past Executive VP of a \$300 million Fortune 500 Div, and founded four manufacturing and high technology companies.



Andy's further accomplishments include US Secretary of Commerce appointee as senior advisor to the US Patent and Trademark office, a Discovery Channel reality TV host and CNN expert commentator, published author of technical business books, and US Government speaker delegate for international economic development.

He is a decorated Vietnam era US Army combat medic veteran, and served 10 years as Northern California Boy Scout Master who mentored a record 47 Eagle Scouts during his tenure.



A partial list of his other publications include: Essentials of Patents (John Wiley Publishers); Patent Writer (Square One Publishers); Boy Scouts of America - Drafting Merit Badge Manual; contributing editor for Entrepreneur Magazine,

Inventor's Digest and others, and a collection of his original southern BBQ recipes.

He now lives in Arizona, and with the support and encouragement from his wife Paula, his own home remodeling projects are likely to never stop.

Index

A

Advisor, Remodeling (Andy Gibbs' claim), 13
 Agreements, Written, 8
 Change Orders, 8
 Details to include, 8
 Importance of, 8
 AI-generated Images (Copyright), 3
 Amazon Prime (remodels compared to), 6, 11

B

Background Checks (Contractors), 8, 91
 Civil records, 8
 Criminal records, 8
 Importance of verifying, 8
 License verification, 8
 Refusal as red flag, 8
 Baths, Temporary, 150
 Bids, Contractor
 Comparing bids, 8, 11
 Importance of multiple, 8
 Pre-Bid Specifications, 45, 11
 Pre-Bid Intangibles, 52, 11
 Reviewing bids, 57
 Qualifications of contractors, 8
 Understanding bid approach, 8
 Big Picture Finance, 96
 Boilerplate (Contract Language), 67
 Adding to contracts, 67
 Creating, 67
 Customizing, 67
 Bootcamp, Remodel, 18
 Budget
 Budget-Busters (Top 16), 105
 Hidden costs, 6, 11
 Informed homeowners, 6
 Not sharing your budget, 11
 Overcharges, 6
 Contingency planning, 8
 Building codes, 32
 Bulletproof Contracts, 6
 Protecting yourself, 6
 Bullied (avoiding being bullied by contractors), 8
 Pressure tactics, 8
 Sales techniques, 8

C

Cash Management, 95
 Chaos, Surviving, 134
 Change Orders, 8
 Detailed documentation, 8
 Clear Vision (importance of), 8
 Competition (Remodeling, compared to), 6
 Contracts
 Adding Boilerplate, 67
 Bulletproof contracts, 6, 11
 Change Orders, 8
 Details to include, 8
 Negotiating, 60
 Payment schedule, 8
 Scope of work, 8
 Timelines, 8
 Written Agreements, 8
 Contractor-ese (understanding), 42
 Contractors
 Background Checks, 8, 91
 Bids (see Bids, Contractor)
 Finding, 75
 Gaslighting, 8
 Handyman vs. Contractor, 79
 Hiring, 6
 License verification, 8
 Pressure tactics, 8
 Red Flags, 6, 84, 11
 Screening, 6
 Shady contractors, 6
 Professional, 76
 Refusing background check, 8
 References, 8
 Copyright (AI Images), 3
 Costs, Hidden, 6, 11
 Material costs, 6
 Labor costs, 6
 Unexpected expenses, 6
 Budget planning, 6
 Customer Service, 115
 Communications, 116

D

Dedication (to Paula Gibbs), 4
 Delays (avoiding), 6
 D.I.Y. (Do-It-Yourself), 76
 Disruptions During Remodel (Top 25), 130
 Document Everything, 9
 Before/after photos, 9
 Receipts, 9
 Email, 9

Warranties, 9
Follow-up processes, 9
Dream Remodel, 6, 12
High quality, 12
Achieving on a budget, 12

E

Effortless Transformations (vs. reality), 6, 11
Ego (not stroking homeowner's), 7

F

Family Safety, 16
Finances, Big Picture, 96

G

Gaslighting, 8
Gibbs, Andy (Author), 1, 3, 175
Gibbs, Paula (Dedication), 4
Ground Rules (Remodeling, Top 10), 8
Gut Instinct (Trusting your gut), 9

H

Handyman
Handyman vs. Contractor, 79
Hidden Costs, 6, 11
HOAs (Homeowners Associations), 32
Home Insurance (updating after remodel), 11
Home Safety, 16

I

Images (AI), 3
Index (This Index), 176
Informed Homeowners, 6
Insurance, Home, 11
Introduction, 6

K

Kitchens, Temporary, 150
Know Your Vision, 8
Know Your "HOW", 25
Know Your "WHAT", 22
Know Your "WHY", 19

L

Livability, Long-Term, 11
Living with a Remodel, 129

M

Maintenance, Proper, 11
MBA (Master of Business Administration, metaphorical), 114
Milestones (Payment Schedule), 8
Moving In, 168

Murphy's Law, 156

N

Negotiate Everything, 60
New Build vs. Remodel, 28

O

Outdoor Remodels, 36
Overcharges, 6

P

Pay The Man, 101
Payment Schedules, 8
Permits, 32
Pets, Remodeling With, 143
Pinterest (remodels compared to), 6, 12
Plan B (Living Arrangements), 8
Pre-Bid Specifications, 45
Pre-Bid Intangibles, 52
Professional Contractors, 76
Project Management, 113
Punch List, 123

R

Red Flags (Contractors), 6, 84
Red Tape, 32
Relationships (Contractor/Client), 7
Remodel-Ready, 172
Remodel vs. New Build, 28
Remodeling
As a War, 6
Disasters, 6
Matters (importance of), 10
Remodeling Advisor (Andy Gibbs), 13
Remodeling Ground Rules (Top 10), 8
Remodeling with Pets, 143
Resources, 174

S

Safety (Family & Home), 16
Savings Tips (Extraordinary), 64
Screening (Contractors), 6
Sharks (Contractors, metaphor), 8
Shoddy work, 6
Speak Contractor-ese, 42
Specifications, Pre-Bid, 45
Stipulations, Contract, 139
Stupid Money, 10
Surviving the Chaos, 134

T

Temp Kitchens & Baths, 150

Timeline (Remodel), 6
Top 10 Remodeling Ground Rules, 8
Total Home Protection, 162
Trusted Remodel Advisor (Book Title), 1, 6
Trust Your Gut, 9

V

Value (Remodel), 11
Verbal Tool Belt, 119
Vision (Knowing Your Vision), 8

W

War (Remodeling as War), 6
Warranties, 157
Remodel Warranties, 157
Total Home Protection, 162
"WHAT" (Choose Your "WHAT"), 22
"WHY" (Know Your "WHY"), 19
Written Agreements, 8

Y

You're Remodel-Ready, 172