

REBO'S REMODELING RULES



- **Manage Your Remodel And Save Thousands**
- **Find, Screen And Hire Right Contractors**
- **Keep Family And Pets Safe During Your Renodel**
- **Over 200 Tips, Tricks and Tactics To Manage**

REBO KNOX

REBO'S REMODELING RULES™

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 Rebo Knox

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, **REBO'S REMODELING RULES** 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.**

REBO'S REMODELING RULES

First Edition

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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.

REBO'S REMODELING RULES

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

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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**.



Family & Home Safety

What You Don't Know Can Hurt You And Your Wallet

Safety in remodeling isn't just hard hats and goggles (though, duh, those matter). It's the real safety stuff: financial ruin, legal nightmares, maybe even a "cops and robbers" issue with your contractors. Remodeling is a muddy mix of sketchy contractors, hidden costs, and red tape galore.

First, the cash. 73% of remodels bust budgets by 20-40% (could be \$10 grand on a \$50,000 remodel)! Financial stress leads to cutting corners, unlicensed contractors, and **creates** disasters.

Then, the red tape. Permits, inspections, codes – boring, but vital. No permits? The building department Red Flags your project, issues fines, and your half-done project is on hold for two months.

Then, the sketchy contractors. More than bids. Check licenses, insurance, references. **Construction has a higher percentage of criminals than other industries (4 in 10 to be precise).** Not all contractors are crooks, my rules help find the good ones. Your family's safety is #1.

Then over-improving. Gold-plated toilets sound fancy, but add value? Over-building is a financial trap: house-rich, cash-poor. A safety net issue.

Pets are family too! Remodeling stresses them. Loud noises, strangers,

hazardous materials are dangerous. Safe space, chemicals/tools out of reach.

So, where do you go from here? **I'll cover all these and 100 more considerations where no other remodeling guide will venture.** We're going to dive deep into the nitty-gritty of smart remodeling, from budgeting and contractor wrangling to design choices and safety protocols. Because a successful remodel isn't just about a pretty space; it's about protecting your family, your finances, and your sanity.



SECTION TWO

REMODEL BOOTCAMP

Hey Power Couple - You Ain't Half Ready For Your Remodel ... Yet.

Your remodel isn't a 5-episode HGTV fantasy - it's a real objective that you're planning to drop a ton of money into, hoping for the best.

You can't just "hope".

The next few chapters presents my no-holds-barred, experience-based bootcamp designed to prepare you for the real remodel trenches.

We're talking budget blowouts, contractor chaos, permit pandemonium, and the unique outdoor remodeling nightmares that can turn your dream oasis into a backyard swamp. Consider this your survival manual, equipping you with the knowledge and cynicism you'll need to fight on the front lines and emerge victorious (and with your sanity intact).

Your remodeling war is coming. You need to be prepared because you're about to become the general.

Let's go!

Know Your “WHY”



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *How To Establish Your “Why”*
- *Learn Alternative Budgets (and Cushions)*
- *See Big Picture ROI and Family Impact*

Hey champ - or chump; is your better half complaining about no counter space?

(Mine was - so I tripled it! Happy wife.)

Now you’re running down the remodel road, huh? A new kitchen? Dreamy bathroom? Maybe you’re finally adding that in-law suite or you’ve been pinning for years. OK - maybe you’re thinking the in-laws should stay in Florida, but listen, I’ve been in this business long enough to know that **“why” you remodel comes before “what” you remodel**. Because let’s be honest, remodeling ain’t cheap, it ain’t fast, and it sure as heck ain’t always pretty. In fact, it can be an absolute nightmare.

So first things first: WHY do you really want to remodel? Is your home outdated and cramping your style? Fair enough. Is it genuinely dysfunctional, making daily life a struggle? Okay, that’s a solid reason. Or are you just bored

and looking for a project? If that's the case, maybe buying a boat would be cheaper. Seriously, I've seen folks remodel just because their neighbors did, and trust me, keeping up with the Joneses is a bottomless pit. And you're probably not as rich as the Joneses.

Now, let's talk brass tacks. Remodeling is a major investment. We're not talking about slapping on a fresh coat of paint here. We're talking about serious cash, time, and a whole lot of disruption to your life. Think dust, noise, strangers in your house at all hours, and the very real possibility of things going sideways. And let's not forget the stress! Choosing finishes, managing budgets, dealing with contractors (more on that later!), it can be overwhelming. It can also make you question all your life choices up to this point.

Before you even start sketching out dream kitchens or spa bathrooms, you need to be brutally honest with yourself about your budget. And I mean really honest. **And you MUST get realistic estimates from MULTIPLE contractors.** Don't just pick the cheapest one or you'll get what you pay for. And for heaven's sake, add a contingency fund! Things will come up. Unexpected plumbing issues, hidden rot, materials that are suddenly backordered – these things DO happen. If you don't have a cushion, you're setting yourself up for a world of hurt.



Another critical “why” is ROI - the return on investment. Will the \$15,000 you pay for that new 48 inch 8-burner Wolf stove actually increase your home's value by \$15,000? It should.

Do you really need to get 100% back on what you put in? Sometimes, yes. Sometimes, no. A sensible remodel can definitely boost your net equity, but overspending on high-end finishes in a modest neighborhood is probably not a smooth move. Do your research, talk to real estate agents, and get a handle on what buyers in your area are actually looking for. Because if you're remodeling to sell, you want to appeal to buyers, not just your own ego.

Beyond the financial aspects, consider the impact on your family. Living through a remodel is stressful. There will be compromises, frustrations, and moments where you question your sanity. Talk to your family, make sure

everyone is on board, and establish some ground rules. And for the love of all that is holy, have an escape plan! Whether it's a weekend getaway or just a quiet evening at a friend's house, you'll need a break from the chaos. Your family (and your sanity) depends on it.

So, take a good, hard look at **why you want to remodel**. Is it a genuine need? A smart investment? Or just a fleeting desire?



CHAPTER 06

Choose Your "WHAT"



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Discover Remodeling's Elusive Sweet Spot*
- *When To Choose "Good, Better, Or Best"*
- *Buy What You Need, Not What They're Selling*

Hey buttercup; you gotta find your SWEET SPOT!

When I see clients who define their remodel dreams as granite countertops or farmhouse sinks, I see shark bait!

So let's first define the **remodel Sweet Spot** – that's the magical balance between "OMG I love it!" and "OMG I can still afford it!"

Because let's face it, every choice for every design detail, material, appliance and fixture in your remodel is available in a "good-better-best" version, yet most homeowners wander into Home Depot to start making selections like a kid grabs candy in a candy store. No plan. Just impulsive grabbing appliances, floor coverings - whatever shiny thing captures their eye.

Take kitchen cabinets, for example. You've got your builder-grade boxes from Home Depot, your semi-custom options from a local shop, and then your

full-blown custom creations handcrafted by a woodworker who probably sweats beads of mahogany juice. Your Home Depot salesman will tell you that cabinets are cabinets right? Wrong. The difference in fit, quality, durability, functionality, features, and lifespan is HUGE. We're talking the difference between a \$10,000 assemble yourself standard particle board cabinet set to \$50,000 for installed, furniture-grade custom-fit solid wood cabinets. That's a \$40,000 *swing* in price just for the cabinets! Homeowners can blow their wad on solid wood cabinet boxes that nobody will ever see, and be forced to buy "like new" appliances off of Craigslist.

That's where the sweet spot comes in. It's about balancing quality, cost, and how it impacts your home's value. Do you really need those fancy, custom cabinets with dovetail joints and soft-close drawers if you're flipping the house in five years? Probably not. But slapping in the cheapest particleboard cabinets you can find online? That's a one-way ticket to Disasterville. Those things will start falling apart faster than a cheap suit, and your "investment" will turn into a money pit faster than contractors cash checks.

The "good-better-best" applies to EVERY choice in your remodel.

Flooring, appliances, plumbing fixtures, even the freakin' insulation and the furnishings you will buy to accessorize your new remodel.

A swimming pool is the perfect example. You get bids that vary by tens of thousands of dollars. What's the difference? Is it the size of the pump? The type of filter? The quality of the tile? Are they cutting corners on the concrete? Are they using a licensed electrician or some "found on Craigslist" dude with tattoos of their last 5 girlfriends crossed out? You need to know what you're paying for before you sign anything. And don't just assume the most expensive bid is the best. Sometimes, contractors are just really good at padding their pockets.

Now, I'm not saying you should always go for the cheapest option. Sometimes, investing in higher-quality materials makes sense. If you plan to stay in your home for the long haul, it might be worth it to splurge on those top-of-the-line windows that will save you money on energy bills for years to come. But you need to be strategic. Overspending on things that don't add significant value to your home is a waste of money. It's called "over-building," and it's a

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

are afraid of tearing out a wall, and fall back to hanging some close-out rolls of wallpaper as their “remodel”. Or they decide “we can keep the existing cabinets, let’s just re-face them. The plumbing’s fine, we’ll just work around it.”

Wrong. You’re being penny-wise and pound-foolish. Nine times out of ten, it’s faster, cheaper, and better to demo down to the studs and start fresh.

Here’s one example. You want to upgrade your lighting. You could pay an electrician five grand to try and snake new wires through your existing walls. Or, you could tear out the drywall, let the electrician run new wiring quickly and safely (bringing it up to current codes), and then have another contractor put up new drywall. Sounds more expensive, right? Maybe not. Consider this: the electrician’s hourly rate is probably higher than the drywaller’s. And snaking wires through old walls is a slow, painstaking process. You might actually save money by doing a full demo. Plus, you won’t end up with a rat’s nest of wires behind your walls, waiting to short out and burn your house down.

If removing that load-bearing wall with dramatically open up the choppy little spaces into a dramatic open-space contemporary – then jack up the roof, chop out that wall and replace it with a beam. Maybe \$10 grand to add \$30 grand in WOW factor and increased home value – but more importantly getting the dream remodel because you didn’t fear “rebuilding”. But your bold vision require you to hire competent craftsmen - more on that later.

Let the data speak for itself.

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) 2023 Remodeling Cost vs. Value Report indicates full gut remodels provide 59-67% return on investment for kitchen renovations, compared to 54-62% for partial remodels. Numbers don’t lie. Translation: a reBUILD delivers a higher ROI than a reMODEL.

Here’s some sample cost breakdowns.

Cost Comparison:

- Partial remodel: \$75-\$125 per square foot
- Full gut/rebuild to studs: \$100-\$250 per square foot
- Potential additional hidden cost savings of 15-25% by addressing underlying issues.

So, are you ready to rebuild your house? Let's start by sorting out some of the red tape – permits, HOA rules, all that fun stuff. Because trust me, you don't want saws buzzing before you know what you're getting into. Ignorance in remodeling is expensive.

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.

Permit fees are often based on the estimated project cost or project square feet, for instance, \$500 permit fee for a \$25,000 kitchen remodel, or \$5.00 / sq. ft. for that 250 sq. ft. addition. Other fees may be standardized by the job", for instance a \$750 flat rate permit fee for a new septic tank.

Look, I get it. Heading off to deal with a building department is as dreadful as heading off to your dentist for a root canal. It seems like a fear-driven hassle, a waste of time and money.

But here's the deal: building codes exist for a reason. They're there to ensure your safety and the structural integrity of your home. And permits are how the city makes sure you're following those their codes. It's not just about generating revenue (although they have to pay for those building inspectors somehow). It's about making sure your house doesn't fall down. It's also about making sure some fly-by-night contractor doesn't take your money and run, leaving you living in a deathtrap.

When you sell your house, real estate agents and buyers will ask whether you pulled permits on your remodel, and if you didn't, they may ask you to get a more expensive inspection of the remodeling work before the sale.

For instance, the buyer's bank may require you to prove that the concrete foundation under that room addition that you built without a permit has the required steel reinforcement bars ("REBAR"). That requires contracting with a construction X-RAY specialist, and a foundation X-RAY can run \$5,000 to \$10,000. A permit for that addition may have cost \$800.

And speaking of money, the fines for building without a permit can be steep. **We're talking potentially \$500 or more per day.** Think about that for a second. Is saving a few bucks on a permit worth risking a five-figure fine? I didn't think so.

Beyond fines, consider your homeowner's insurance. Let's say you have an electrical fire caused by some code violating wiring completed by a handyman without a permit. Will your insurance company actually process your claim, jack up your premiums, or cancel your coverage? They'll likely argue that the fire was a result of non-permitted and unsafe work, leaving you holding the bag. So, while you think you are saving money on permits and cheap, unlicensed handymen, you could be risking a lot more. Go into your remodel wide-eyed!

Now, different types of projects obviously have different build requirements.

A simple bathroom remodel *might not* need a permit, but a room addition or anything involving structural changes, electrical, plumbing, or gas lines? Absolutely. And don't think you can just sneak it past them. Building inspectors have a way of showing up at the most inconvenient times. Trust me, I've seen it. They're like ninjas, but instead of throwing stars, they throw stop-work orders.

The irony - your project gets red-tagged because you tried skipping the red tape.

And when it comes to HOAs, I know what you're thinking: **"It's my house, I can do what I want!"** Well, not exactly. When you bought that house, you agreed to abide by the HOA's rules. And if you violate them, they can hit you with fines, or even force you to undo the work. They can be a real pain in the you-know-what - but some remodeling work you can get away with without ever disclosing it to the HOA - more on that in a moment.

Codes, rules and regulations were created for good reasons, but I hate to be regulated (even though I'm guilty of authoring new building codes that others across the country must now comply with). SAFETY is the foundation for every decision I make - from how I'm holding a saw, to conducting background checks on my contractor hires for my family's safety, to checking whether my construction supply choices and work processes will comply with the applicable building, plumbing, electrical, and fire codes.

Now, do ALL remodeling projects require city building permits or HOA approval? NO, but you (and I) need to consider a few things:

1. If you undertake interior work on systems that could jeopardize your safety (like pulling new 220V wiring from your circuit breaker box for that relocated electric oven) the HOA will never see it, but a building permit (and work inspection) helps ensure your safety. In other words, if an "HOA cop" can see work being performed that clearly violates the CC&Rs, get HOA approval. If they can't see it (like that hideous disco ball you're hanging in your living room), blow off the HOA. But I'm going to question why you think a disco ball is a good idea.
2. Performing major interior remodel work on your electrical or plumbing systems without a building permit could complicate the future sale of your home, and compromise your safety while living there. Get the permit.

3. Question whether your homeowner's insurance would cover fire damage if it was caused by an electrical short from out-of-code wiring completed by a handyman.
4. If you don't know which end of a screw driver to use, then you're the homeowner who can be bamboozled by most contractors who tell you they are complying with building codes. To protect yourself (from the building department, your insurance agent and the contractor), pull job permits.

Secret - almost all contractors occasionally take shortcuts that violate codes. Knowing their work will be inspected by the building department keeps an honest contractor "more" honest.

5. Maintain detailed remodeling records. Take photos of construction details at every step, not just photos of the pretty completed job, and file them away. **If your contractor gets intimidated by you taking close-up photos of their work, then you're probably keeping them honest.**

The key is to do your homework before you start your remodel. Check with your local building department to see what permits you need, and if you're in an HOA, study the CC&Rs before you let your contractor lift a hammer. Assume nothing.

Pro Tip:

If permits are required, have the contractor get them - and if he balks at the idea, that's a huge red flag (we're going to take a DEEP DIVE on contractor red flags later on). It probably means they're planning to cut corners, do shoddy work, don't have the licenses they told you they have, or they have a bad history with the building inspectors. I'll show you dozens more contractor red flags; stay tuned.

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

or metal fixtures with long lead times.

Special Consideration: Specify who tracks material lead times and what happens if materials arrive late (e.g., substitute materials, rescheduling).

14. Wildlife & Environmental Regulations

Issue: Some areas have protected trees, wetland restrictions, or wildlife habitats that can restrict construction.

Special Consideration: Require pre-project environmental assessments and specify how unexpected environmental restrictions will be handled.

15. Post-Construction Warranty & Defects in Outdoor Materials

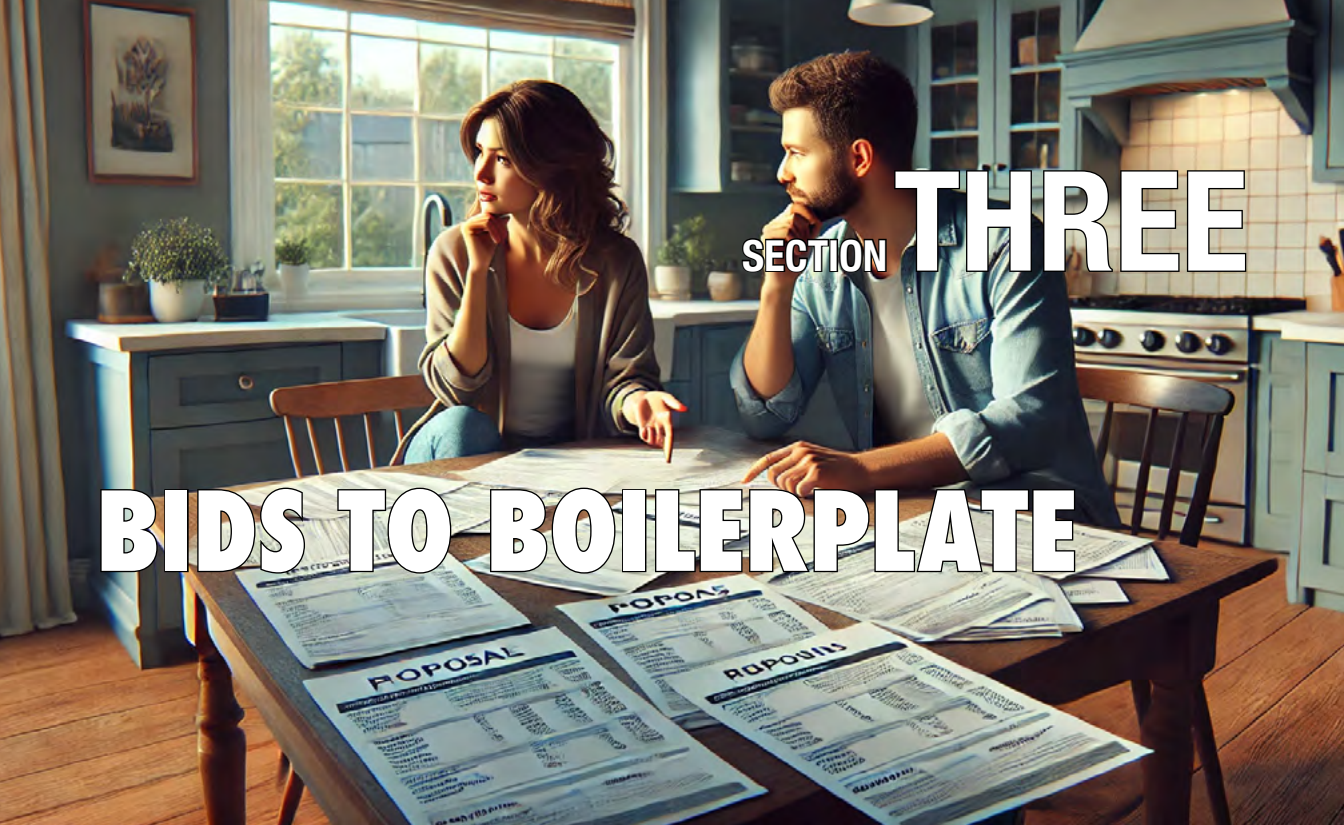
Issue: Outdoor materials (wood, concrete, metal) face extreme weather exposure, leading to premature failure or defects.

Special Consideration: Ensure warranty coverage includes weather-related deterioration, settlement

Outdoor remodeling can be fantastic. It's about creating a space where you can unwind, entertain, and pretend you're not living in the real world for a few precious moments. But it's also a complex and risky endeavor that demands careful planning and a healthy dose of paranoia. By considering the 15 points outlined in this article – from weather delays and material storage to neighbor complaints and utility line marking – you'll be well-prepared to protect your wallet and your sanity.

Don't be naive. A detailed contract that addresses these specific outdoor concerns is your best defense against the unforeseen. Remember, hope for the best, but plan for the worst. The more you prepare upfront, the less likely you are to have your dream oasis become a swamp.

You've got this! Now go sip that margarita.



SECTION THREE

BIDS TO BOILERPLATE

Oh, Enlightened One, Construction Lingo DOES Matter.

Contractors speak a different language, and if you're not fluent, you're about to get schooled – financially. This section delivers a crash course in “contractor-ese” so you can interview contractors like a pro, sniff out BS faster than a hound dog on scent, and command respect.

Bid numbers matter, but contractor proposals are Trojan Horses packed with hidden costs and material swaps. I'll show you why you need to review them with a fine-tooth comb, comparing every line item to your pre-bid specifications (your most important starting point). You'll learn how to dissect bids, expose the sneaky stuff, and ensure you're getting what you're paying for – not some cheap knock-offs.

You'll learn to negotiate price (like a boss), but the real battle begins with the fine print. This section decodes key contractor terms and specific contract clauses you must understand before signing anything. Because that contract? It's not a friendly agreement; it's a legal minefield. This crash course will equip you to work effectively with your attorney, ensuring these crucial protections make it into the final contractor agreement.

Let's go!

Speak Contractor-ese



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Learn To Speak Contractor-Ese (To Save \$\$\$)*
- *How To Be The Interrogator, Not A “Mark”*
- *Construction Words Establish Your Authority*

Hey Einstein - figure out “Cricket” or “Falsework” yet?

Your remodeling quest not only sets you on a path to find the perfect contractor, it's equally important to avoid the bad ones.

You're an easy mark for contractors if you're not ready to speak their language. If they think you're a clueless Lucy who can be taken advantage of, they will.

I can't express enough how critical it is for you to be ready to communicate with contractors in *their language*. I'll say it again: **Construction Words Matter** - especially when you include them in your bid specifications - your project “specs”, in their proposals, and importantly, in your build contracts. You don't need to be an Einstein, but you *will* need to sound somewhat schooled in construction (even if you fake it) to protect yourself and your project.

Let's face it, your dream remodel can quickly turn into the Nightmare on Elm

Here's scenario #1: Your lights start flickering, the electrician you called shows up, and you say "I really don't know what's going on, but all of a sudden the lights flickered and my cat jumped". They respond with:

*"We'll need to perform a comprehensive circuit analysis, including load calculations and voltage drop assessments, while verifying the integrity of the service entrance conductors and branch circuit wiring using megger testing and thermal imaging. **That will cost \$2,700."** That gobbledygook "contractor-ese" leaves you believing that his \$2,700 is justified for his apparent expertise.*

Here's scenario #2: Your lights start flickering, the electrician you called shows up, and you say "I've noticed my lights flickering. Could this be related to the **circuit breaker**, or is it more likely an issue with the **wiring or the electrical panel**?"

The contractor's response is more likely to take this tone: *"Flickering lights can have several causes. It could be as simple as loose connections in a light fixture or outlet. First, we'll check for any obvious loose connections. If that's not the issue, we'll inspect your electrical panel for signs of overloading or faulty breakers. We can run that diagnosis for \$350.00". **Only \$350! Words saved you from a \$2,400 rip-off - something that literally happens to clueless homeowners every day.***

WHAT A DIFFERENCE using a few smartly-placed words can make.

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?

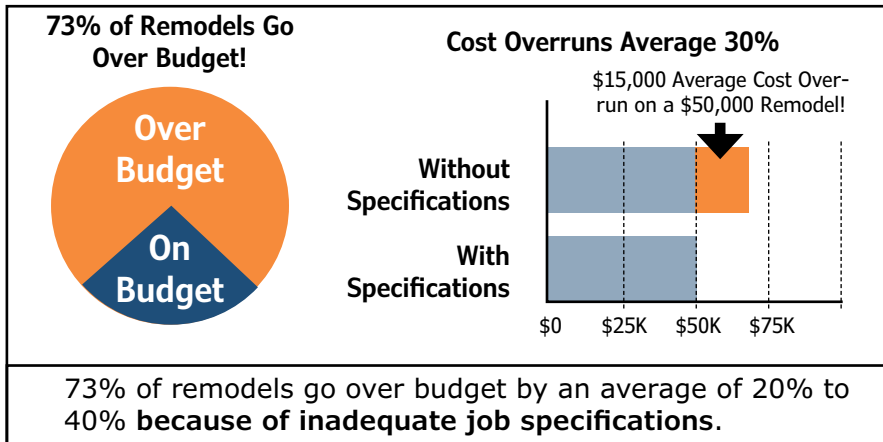
Yea, right. I should have known better than to ask, but I didn't write those earlier chapters to fill a few pages with some fluff. You **MUST** answer those questions now, because they are the map to your remodel.

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

quote you a low price and then try to up-sell you on “better” materials once the project starts? That’s the bait-and-switch, and it’s a classic contractor trick. A detailed spec sheet ensures they’re bidding on exactly what you want, not using some cheap substitute left over from their last job.

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2. **helps prevent inflated pricing.** Some contractors might inflate costs or include unnecessary extras if they know you have a healthy budget. Without that information, they’re more likely to price the job based solely on the work required rather than tailoring the bid to match what you can spend.



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!

protecting yourself from financial and legal harm as well. It's about peace of mind.

PRO TIP: Make a Background Check a Contractor REQUIREMENT (another Red Flag Detector)

That's a pro tip that can save you a lot of trouble

During your bid reviews, tell potential contractors up front that a background check will be a requirement before signing any remodeling contract, and they must authorize it. **If they balk or refuse, consider that a giant, flashing red flag.** They know there's something in their background that will get them scratched off your contractor consideration list.

Your home is your ultimate safe space. With a contractor background check, you'll have the information you need to make informed decisions about who you let inside. Don't be afraid to ask tough questions. Don't be afraid to demand proof of licenses and insurance. And don't be afraid to walk away if something feels off. Your family's safety is worth more than any remodel.

So if you decide that all of my other advice is horse cocky, DO take this one seriously. Do your homework. Be vigilant. And for God's sake, do a background check. It's the best way to sleep soundly at night, knowing you've done everything you can to protect the ones you love.

This isn't about being paranoid; it's about being responsible.

SECTION FIVE

CASH MANAGEMENT

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.

Big Picture Finance



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Remodeling Costs are More Than Job Costs*
- *Learn Every Path Into Your Wallet*
- *Meet With Financial Advisors*

Hey Cheapskate, here's where the dollars are hiding.

Construction contract costs are easy to see, but how do you manage all of the hidden costs (or financial benefits)? Here's where to start your investigating.

You thought "costs" started and ended with the contractor's bid? Bless your heart. That's just the tip of the iceberg, my friend. I'm here to give you a financial reality check, because nobody else will.

Beyond the Contractor's Price Tag: The Real Cost of Remodeling (aka Where Your Money Really Goes)







1. **Property Tax Increase (aka The Taxman Cometh):** That gorgeous new addition? It's not just going to add value to your home; it's likely to increase your property taxes too. Check with your local assessor's

to ROI. A gold-plated toilet might be fabulous, but it might not add as much value to your home as a well-executed kitchen remodel. Research what buyers in your area are looking for. Don't overspend on upgrades that won't translate into increased home value. Don't remodel for yourself unless you plan on living there forever. Remodel for the market.

7. **Tax Write-offs (aka The Silver Lining (Maybe)):** Some remodels might qualify for tax deductions, especially if you're creating a home office or making energy-efficient upgrades. Consult with a tax professional to see if any of your project costs are deductible. It's like finding a twenty-dollar bill in your old jeans – a welcome surprise.
8. **Tangential Financial Considerations (aka The Hidden Costs):**
 - **Increased Utility Bills:** That bigger house means bigger bills. Factor in potential increases in heating, cooling, and electricity costs.
 - **Temporary Housing:** If your remodel makes your home uninhabitable, you'll need to factor in the cost of temporary housing.
 - **Storage Costs:** You might need to rent storage space for your furniture and belongings during the remodel.
 - **Opportunity Cost:** Consider the time you'll spend managing the remodel. Is it worth the cost compared to hiring a project manager?
9. **Tying Up Your Property (aka The Handcuff Clause):** Beware of pre-lien notices! Contractors might bury them in contracts or mail them separately. These notices mean they can put a lien on your home if they, their subs, or suppliers aren't paid, and believe me, if you're in dispute over an issue, you won't be paying them. A lien could trigger the bank cutting your funding - and that could leave you without options to hire new contractors to finish up. Liens can cloud your title, hurt refinancing, or even lead to foreclosure. Protect yourself: read everything carefully, know your state's lien laws, communicate payment schedules clearly, pay on time for good work, and get lien waivers from subcontractors. Stay alert to avoid major headaches down the road.

10. Flat-out Getting Screwed (aka The Fraudster): Now here's a reality check (not fear-mongering). The Federal Trade Commission notes that "the vast majority" of fraud crimes go unreported, and getting ripped off by contractors falls squarely into that bucket.

There are some real-life horror stories of homeowner financial losses that WERE pursued in the courts, but most homeowners who get screwed never take legal action against the contractor - that should have been avoided:

-  *Steve Venegas Case (Arizona, 2025):* Steve Venegas has been identified as a fake contractor accused of defrauding dozens of homeowners in Arizona. He has 27 complaints with the Arizona Registrar of Contractors dating back to 2021 and has been found guilty of contracting without a license in Peoria Municipal Court.
-  *Riley Case (Utah, 2025):* Robert Patrick Riley, a pool construction contractor in Utah, has faced multiple criminal charges, including communications fraud and theft by deception, for accepting payments without completing projects. He has been charged with a total of three counts of communications fraud, theft, and two counts of theft by deception, all second-degree felonies.
-  *Thorson Case (Arizona, 2019):* In 2019, James Patrick Thorson was reported to have used a fraudulent license number to secure a \$15,000 deposit from a homeowner in Arizona. He accepted the deposit but never started the project.
-  *Hall Case (Indiana, 2019):* Codey Hall, working for Cosar Construction, was charged with theft and home improvement fraud in November 2019 after taking \$30,000 from Erica Hudson, a single mother, for an addition to her home that was never completed¹. Hudson paid Hall the money in May 2019, which represented her entire divorce settlement and life savings.
-  *Wharton Case (Arizona, 2019):* Joseph William Wharton II pleaded guilty to contracting without a license after defrauding an elderly homeowner of \$7,900 for substandard roof repairs. He was ordered to pay restitution.
-  *Libby Case (Arizona, 2019):* Donald Elliot Libby II was charged after accepting \$1,400 for a granite countertop installation that was never

started. He has multiple complaints against him for contracting without a license.

My Bottom Line Advice:

Pages 100
- 149 Not
Included in
"Look Inside"
Sample

Temp Kitchens & Baths



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

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

Channel Your Inner Gordon Ramsey!

Right about now, you're questioning your life choices, and you're wondering what drywall dust in your Ramen noodles will taste like.

Because let's be real, a major home remodel isn't just "exciting." It's a full-on assault on your daily routine. If you don't plan ahead, you'll be microwaving Ramen on a cardboard box and brushing your teeth with a garden hose in the driveway. I'm here to save you from yourself.

When Do You Need a Temporary Kitchen or Bathroom? (A.K.A. When Your Life Will Fall Apart Without One)

If you're ripping out your entire kitchen or bathroom, congratulations—you've signed up for weeks (if not months) of inconvenience. Here's when you absolutely must have a backup plan:

- Total Kitchen Gut Jobs – If you’re taking it down to the studs, you’re not cooking in there anytime soon. Unless you like eating cold cereal for a month, make a plan.
- Bathroom Remodels (Especially If You Only Have One) – You can hold it for a few hours, sure, but weeks without a toilet? Hope you like bonding with the neighbors.
- Remodels That “Take Longer Than Expected” – Spoiler alert: They all do. Your “two-week project” will somehow turn into a six-week saga. Prepare accordingly.
- Multiple Room Remodels – If both your kitchen and bathroom are under construction, pitch a tent in the backyard, or move in to an extended-stay hotel.
- Households with Kids or Pets – Trust me, you don’t want to explain to a toddler why they have to use a stinky port-a-potty.

How to Set Up a Temporary Kitchen Without Losing Your Sanity

Step 1: Pick a Location (a.k.a. Your New, Less Glamorous Kitchen)

Your “kitchen” is wherever you can fit a table, a few appliances, and a place to store food. Good options:

- Laundry Room – Bonus: It has a sink. Downside: You’ll be making dinner next to your dirty socks.
- Basement/Garage – If you don’t mind eating in a dungeon or next to your car.
- Spare Room/Dining Room – Just don’t burn the house down with your hot plate.
- Outdoors (If You’re Lucky & It’s Warm) – Grilling every night sounds great until it rains.

Step 2: Essential Equipment & Supplies (a.k.a. How to Avoid Starving)

You’re not getting a chef’s kitchen, so keep it simple.

- Portable Cooking Gear – Grab a microwave, hot plate, toaster oven, slow cooker, or Instant Pot. These will be your new best friends.

- Mini-Fridge or Backup Cooler – Because warm milk is disgusting.
- Water & Sink Hack – If your kitchen sink is gone, use a utility sink, bathroom sink, or big water dispenser with a catch bucket. Also, stock up on paper plates unless you enjoy washing dishes in the bathtub.
- Food Prep & Storage – A folding table = instant countertop. Keep dry goods in bins so you're not digging through grocery bags like a raccoon.

Step 3: Plan for Cleanup (Because You Will Make a Mess)

- Trash & Recycling Nearby – Otherwise, you'll have a science experiment growing in your temp kitchen.
- Disposable Everything – Sorry, environment. I love you, but I hate washing dishes in weird places.
- Dishwashing Strategy – If you must wash real dishes, get a plastic tub and designate a "washing station" in the bathroom or laundry room.

How to Set Up a Temporary Bathroom (Because You Can't Hold It Forever)

Step 1: Figure Out Where You'll...You Know...

Got Another Bathroom? Great. Make it the family bathroom.

No Backup Bathroom? Uh-oh. Options include:

- Renting a Porta-Potty – Yes, it's a thing. No, it's not glamorous.
- Using a Camping Toilet – Fun fact: They exist. Less fun fact: You have to empty them.
- Begging a Neighbor or Gym for Access – Works best if you're really nice to them.

Step 2: Set Up a Sink & Hygiene Station

- Utility Sink or Large Water Jug + Basin – It's not fancy, but it works.

- Baby Wipes & Hand Sanitizer – You’ll use them more than you think.
- Toiletries in a Caddy – Like college dorm life, but worse.

Step 3: Shower Solutions (a.k.a. How to Stay Married During This Process)

Got Another Shower? Use It. If not:

- Portable Shower Tent + Solar Shower Bag (Best for summer.)
- Use the Gym, Pool, or Bribe a Friend. (Bringing cookies helps.)
- Worst-Case Scenario: Baby Wipes & Dry Shampoo. (Desperate times call for desperate hygiene.)

Pro Tips for Surviving Your Temporary Setup

- Plan and Make Meals Ahead – Because you will get sick of takeout.
- Label Everything – No one wants to play “Where’s the Peanut Butter?” every day.
- Stay Flexible – Things will go wrong. Just roll with it.
- Get Noise-Canceling Headphones – Unless you love hearing saws and hammering 12 hours a day.
- Stockpile Coffee & Snacks – A hungry, under-cafeinated person is an angry person.
- Block Off Dangerous Areas – Especially if you have kids, pets, or clumsy adults.
- Keep the End Goal in Mind – You will have a beautiful new kitchen/bathroom. Eventually.

Final Thoughts (A.K.A. Accept the Chaos, and You’ll Be Fine)

Temporary kitchens and bathrooms aren’t luxurious, but they will save your sanity. Think of it as a minor inconvenience on the way to your dream home. With a little planning, some strategic appliance choices, and a sense of humor, you’ll get through it without losing your mind.

And hey, one day, when you’re sipping coffee in your brand-new kitchen, you’ll laugh about the time you made pasta in the laundry room. (Or at least, you might.)

If you're not into camping, it's time to head to an outdoor store with your credit card. Here's a crash course on what you might want to buy.

Products & Setups for Temporary Kitchens & Bathrooms

To make your temporary setup as functional as possible, here are some product recommendations for both kitchens and bathrooms. These will help you stay organized, clean, and comfortable during the remodeling process.

Temporary Kitchen Setup: Must-Have Products

1. Essential Appliances & Cooking Tools

- Portable Electric Cooktop (Hot Plate) – Example: Duxtop Portable Induction Cooktop
- Toaster Oven – Example: Breville Smart Oven
- Microwave – Example: Panasonic Compact Microwave Oven
- Slow Cooker or Instant Pot – Example: Instant Pot Duo 7-in-1
- Electric Griddle or Skillet – Example: Presto Electric Skillet
- Outdoor Grill – Example: Weber Spirit II Gas Grill

2. Refrigeration & Food Storage

- Mini Fridge with Freezer – Example: BLACK+DECKER Compact Refrigerator
- Large Cooler for Extra Storage – Example: YETI Tundra 45 Cooler
- Food Storage Containers – Example: Rubbermaid Brilliance Food Storage Set
- Over-the-Door Pantry Organizer – Example: SimpleHouseware Over-the-Door Pantry Rack

3. Sink & Dishwashing Alternatives

- Collapsible Dishwashing Tub – Example: SAMMART Foldable Dish Tub
- Portable Water Dispenser – Example: Primo Countertop Water Dispenser

- Drying Rack – Example: OXO Good Grips Folding Drying Rack
- Disposable Plates, Cups & Cutlery – Example: Dixie 10" Paper Plates

4. Temporary Counter & Prep Space

- Folding Table for Food Prep – Example: Lifetime 4-Foot Adjustable Table
- Rolling Kitchen Cart for Storage – Example: Amazon Basics Rolling Storage Cart
- Heavy-Duty Extension Cord for Appliances – Example: GE 3-Outlet Power Strip

Temporary Bathroom Setup: Must-Have Products

1. Alternative Shower & Hygiene Solutions

- Portable Shower Stall – Example: Coleman Solar Shower
- Portable Shower Tent – Example: WolfWise Pop-Up Shower Tent
- Gym Membership or Nearby Facility Access – Consider using a YMCA, Planet Fitness, or a local community center for showers.

2. Sink & Handwashing Station

- Folding Utility Sink with Faucet Hookup – Example: Goplus Portable Camping Sink
- Water Dispenser & Hand Soap Station – Example: Igloo 5-Gallon Water Cooler
- No-Rinse Body Wipes for Quick Cleans – Example: Medline ReadyBath Cleansing Wipes

3. Portable Toilet Solutions

- Rent a Porta-Potty – Companies like United Site Services or Honey Bucket rent temporary toilets.
- Camping Toilet for Short-Term Use – Example: Camco Portable Travel Toilet
- Flushable Wipes & Sanitary Products – Example: Dude Wipes Flushable Wipes

A woman in a white shirt and blue overalls stands in a modern kitchen, talking on a red phone. A man in a white t-shirt is kneeling on a checkered tile floor, cleaning a large spill with a cloth. The kitchen features white cabinets, a stainless steel range hood, and a large refrigerator. The scene is brightly lit with warm tones.

SECTION EIGHT

BEWARE MURPHY'S LAW

“Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong”

New appliances or not, things break, hoses are kinked when contractors install new dishwashers and sinks, and new electrical receptacles short out (even after you've checked everything during the walkthrough and completion of all your punch list items. Because Murphy says so.

What can you do about it?

Your remodel is your personal game of Whac-A-Mole. You fix one problem, and another one pops up somewhere else - sometimes in a completely unrelated part of the house, just for fun. That pristine new tile floor? Somehow, your contractor's boot managed to scuff it on the way out (with check in hand, of course). The freshly painted walls? Oh, look, there's a mystery dent that no one will take responsibility for. And don't even get me started on the sneaky little leaks that don't reveal themselves until after you've smugly declared the project “officially done.”

But here's the thing: expecting perfection in a remodel is like expecting a toddler to eat a chocolate ice cream cone without dripping - it's ain't gonna happen. The real skill isn't in avoiding problems (because you can't), but in knowing how to protect yourself from them.

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

see that slow plumbing leak in the wall until mold starts growing through the drywall - in 6-8 months. Think of it as protection against sloppy craftsmanship or improper installation.

A solid contractor should offer a **minimum one-year workmanship warranty** (though some offer longer). This covers things like:

- Leaky plumbing connections they installed
- Cabinets that start separating due to poor installation
- Tile that cracks or grout that crumbles because it wasn't applied correctly
- Doors that won't close properly because framing was off

If something fails due to poor installation within the warranty period, the contractor should fix it—free of charge.

- Pro Tip: Before hiring a contractor, ask them exactly what their workmanship warranty covers and get it in writing. A reputable contractor will have no problem providing this.

NOTE: Most homeowners have no idea that lumber sold today is too green (not fully kiln dried). This means that it can easily shrink and twist as it dries in the months following installation in your remodel - and this twisting and shrinking can pull drywall joints apart, cause drywall nails to pop through the newly painted surface, or cause windows or doors to skew, making them hard to open. Make sure to include a clause in the warranty section of your contractor agreement that covers repairs of damage caused by the use of green or wet wood in your remodel (contractors will curse me for telling you this).

2. Manufacturer Warranties on Products & Materials

Everything installed in your remodel - from appliances to flooring - comes with its own manufacturer warranty. These warranties aren't the contractor's responsibility to fix, but they are the contractor's responsibility to hand over to you in that neat and complete warranty package.

Manufacturer warranties will cover:

- Appliances (refrigerators, dishwashers, ovens, water heaters)

- Plumbing Fixtures (faucets, showerheads, toilets, sinks)
- Lighting Fixtures (chandeliers, recessed lighting, under-cabinet lighting)
- HVAC Systems (furnaces, air conditioners, thermostats)
- Cabinetry & Countertops (warranty against defects, peeling, cracking)
- Flooring & Tile (covering manufacturer defects, wear-and-tear guarantees)
- Windows & Doors (warranty against seal failure, cracking, warping)
- Paint & Finishes (some brands offer guarantees against peeling or fading)

Manufacturer warranties **may** cover:

In some cases, the manufacturer of a product may cover the labor cost to correct the product problem. For instance, the countertop supplier will warranty the product materials, but if the material fails who will pay for the labor to replace it. Your warranty for the toaster oven may simply state: "Return the item to the retail store for replacement", but you're not going to carry a countertop anywhere. Although it's not the contractor's fault for installing faulty material, the manufacturer may cover his labor cost for removing and re-installing the new material.

Check your product warranties for built-in items for coverage of associated labor. This could literally save thousands on expensive built-in appliances, cabinets and other items.

Most manufacturers require proof of purchase and proper installation for their warranties to be valid.

How Your Contractor Should Handle Warranties

A professional contractor should make your life easier by organizing all warranties into one easy-to-reference warranty folder (physical or digital). Here's what that should include:

- A Written Copy of Their Workmanship Warranty – Clear terms, length

of coverage, and how to request repairs.

- All Manufacturer Warranties – Including coverage periods and contact information for claims.
- Receipts & Model Numbers for Installed Products – Many manufacturers require this for warranty claims.
- Maintenance & Care Instructions – Because some warranties require regular maintenance to stay valid.

Pro Tip: If your contractor doesn't provide the manufacturer warranties, you could be stuck hunting them down yourself if something breaks. **Make sure that warranty folder is a top item on your final payment punch list.**

Why Warranties Matter More Than You Think

- Stuff Breaks – Even the best materials and installations can fail unexpectedly. Warranties protect you from costly repairs.
- You Already Paid for Them – The price of warranties is baked into what you paid for the remodel. Make sure you get what you paid for.
- They Affect Your Home's Value – If you ever sell your home, transferable warranties on things like windows, roofing, and appliances can boost resale value.

What about those "extended warranty plans"?

Do NOT get suckered into buying extended warranties for your appliances and big-ticket items. It's my experience that if a product is going to break, it will usually happen within the (usual) 1-year warranty period. If it lasts that long without breaking, it will probably go another 10 years.

Consumer's Reports backs me up on this one - it has long argued extended warranties are rarely cost-effective, estimating that for every dollar spent on these plans, consumers get back about 50–60 cents in benefits on average. Retailers profit heavily—service plans are a \$40 billion industry annually—because many buyers never use them.

So, the manufacturer's and contractor's warranties should directly cover your remodel materials and workmanship, but what about overall home coverage?

Let's take a look ...

Total Home Protection



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- *Re-appraise Your Property*
- *Update Homeowner Insurance Policies*
- *Consider A One or Two Year Home Warranty*

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

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've poured your heart, soul, and a hefty chunk of change into this place, so you want to make damn sure it's all covered, right? Well, Sherlock, that means taking a hard look at your insurance and warranties. Because trust me, the last thing you want is a leaky roof or a busted AC and no one to call.

Step 1: Updating Your Home Insurance Policy

First things first: homeowner's insurance. You've just boosted the value of your home, which means your old insurance policy might not cut it anymore.

You need to update your coverage to reflect the new reality. Think about it: if a fire breaks out, you want to be able to rebuild your new kitchen, not the old one. So, call your insurance agent, pronto. Tell them about all the upgrades you've made – the fancy appliances, the custom cabinets, the solid gold doorknobs (just kidding... mostly). They'll help you adjust your policy to make sure you're fully covered.

Your pre-remodel home insurance policy was based on the value and condition of your home before you spent all that money upgrading it. If you don't update your policy, you may be underinsured, meaning your shiny new remodel won't be fully covered if something happens.

What to Review & Update with Your Insurance Provider:

- **Increase Your Dwelling Coverage:** Your "dwelling" coverage is what pays to rebuild your home if it's damaged or destroyed. If you added square footage, upgraded materials, or did major structural work, your home is now worth more—and your policy should reflect that.
- **Add Coverage for High-End Materials & Custom Work:** If your remodel included luxury finishes (e.g., custom cabinets, stone countertops, high-end appliances, designer fixtures), check if your policy covers replacement value. Many standard policies only cover basic materials—which means you could end up with builder-grade replacements if you ever file a claim.
- **Check Personal Property Coverage:** Did your remodel include new furniture, smart home tech, or upgraded electronics? Make sure your personal property coverage accounts for them. Some items may need to be listed separately under scheduled personal property coverage.
- **Consider Ordinance & Code Coverage:** If your home is older, your remodel may have uncovered outdated wiring, plumbing, or structural elements that needed to be brought up to code. If a future event (fire, flood, etc.) damages your home, will your insurance cover rebuilding to current code? Some policies don't unless you have ordinance & law coverage.
- **Add Coverage for Detached Structures:** If your remodel included a new deck, shed, pool house, or detached garage, check if your insurance automatically covers these or if you need to add them.

making replacement parts two years later. A home warranty provider may replace the entire unit, whereas a manufacturer warranty won't.

5. **When You Sell Your Home:** A home warranty can be transferred to the new buyer, making your home more attractive on the market. Many sellers include a one-year home warranty as a selling incentive, especially after major renovations.
6. **When the Problem is a Gray Area:** Sometimes, it's hard to tell if a problem is due to a manufacturer's defect or a contractor's mistake. Both parties might point fingers, leaving you stuck in the middle. A home warranty can bypass this blame game and just get the problem fixed.

Pro Tip: Not all home warranties are created equal. Read the fine print! Some have service call fees, exclusions, and payout limits. Choose one that covers what you actually need.



SECTION NINE

THAT'S A WRAP

Congrats! You've worked hard to get here.

Your remodel has been more than just new cabinets, fresh coat of paint, or a fancy new bathroom. You've made a huge investment in your comfort, your lifestyle, and your home's future value. You put in the work, the money, and the patience - so take a moment to appreciate the transformation.

Were there be a few hiccups along the way? Of course. You made it through. That's remodeling.

So go forth with a new skill and confidence.

Now, kick back, pour yourself a drink, and enjoy the beautiful home you just made possible. You earned it.

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.

- Loloi Layla Persian-Inspired Rug (\$350 for 8x10) – Looks vintage, but is actually stain-resistant. Perfect if you have kids, pets, or clumsy friends.

Side Tables & Consoles That Don't Look Like Junk

- CB2 Nova Console (\$599) – Sleek, modern, and perfect for storing remotes and snacks.
- West Elm Martini Side Table (\$199) – Compact, stylish, and adds a modern edge to your space.

Lighting That Sets the Mood

- Philips Hue Smart Light Bars (\$129 for 2) – Perfect for ambient lighting behind the TV.

Outdoor Living Area: No More Folding Chairs & Rusty Fire Pits

If you've just remodeled your patio, backyard, or deck, your plastic chairs and \$20 Walmart fire pit need to go.

Seating That Looks Expensive but Can Handle the Weather

- Article Sala Teak Outdoor Sofa (\$1,699) – Modern, sleek, and actually weather-resistant.
- Serena & Lily Capistrano Lounge Chair (\$998 each) – Yes, it's pricey, but it lasts forever.

An Outdoor Rug That Ties Everything Together

- Dash & Albert Indoor/Outdoor Rug (\$598 for 8x10) – Designed to handle rain, dirt, and wine spills.

A Fire Pit That's Actually Worth It

- Solo Stove Bonfire (\$299) – Smokeless, easy to clean, and won't leave you smelling like campfire all night.

Outdoor Dining That Looks High-End

- West Elm Porto Outdoor Dining Table (\$1,399) – A statement piece that doesn't fall apart after one season.
- CB2 Ixtapa Black Bar Stools (\$229 each) – Sleek, stylish, and durable.

A large, modern living room with a high ceiling and large windows. A family of four is sitting on a light blue sectional sofa. A golden retriever is lying on the floor. In the background, there is a fireplace with a stone surround and a large television. To the left, a dining area is visible with a wooden table and chairs. The room is well-lit with natural light from the windows and warm interior lighting.

You're Remodel-Ready

Thankfully, we're here - the end of the book. Now *I* can get back to trimming out those new kitchen cabinets that my wife's been nagging me about.

But for you, it's the beginning of a new life in your newly remodeled home. Congratulations! You're safe, didn't become another sad remodel statistic, and are now miles ahead of the average homeowner who jumps into remodeling with nothing but blind optimism and a Pinterest board.

You've learned how to plan like a pro, protect your budget, hire the right people, and avoid the costly mistakes that plague so many remodels. You understand the importance of contracts, warranties, and insurance updates—things most homeowners don't even think about until it's too late.

What You've Gained from This Book

A Smarter Approach to Remodeling – You now know how to budget properly, negotiate better deals, and cut costs without cutting quality.

The Power to Control the Process – You're no longer at the mercy of contractors, vague estimates, or unexpected costs. You have a step-by-step plan to keep your remodel on track.

Long-Term Protection for Your Investment – You've learned how to secure warranties, update insurance, and even consider a home

warranty for added security—ensuring your remodel pays off for years to come.

But here's the most important thing: You are now an informed homeowner. And informed homeowners don't get ripped off, don't overpay, and don't end up in remodeling horror stories.

About The Author

The Original Trusted Remodel Advisor



Rebo Knox swung his first hammer at age five — the son of a no-nonsense engineer who believed character was built one bent nail at a time. By twenty, Rebo was serving as a U.S. Army combat medic by day and building roof trusses by night. At twenty-one, he and a crew of fellow first responders launched a remodeling business in Central Texas that kept homeowners out of trouble — and contractors honest.

After his military service, he earned a degree in Architectural Engineering and followed it with an MBA. While most builders were figuring out how to upsell countertops, Rebo was managing multi-million-dollar Bay Area construction projects, writing sections of the Uniform Fire Code, and serving as Chapter President of the American Institute of Building Design.



Over his five-decade career, he's led the design and oversight of more than 100 commercial and residential builds, trained dozens of remodelers, and developed the spec-first approach that now powers the Trusted Remodel Advisor platform.

Rebo-ism #24: *"The first mistake homeowners make is thinking a remodel starts with a Pinterest board. It starts with a damn plan."*

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

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