

# STEP 1

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF TO ENSURE A **HAPPY** REMODELING EXPERIENCE

QUESTION		ANSWER	
1.	How do I know how much it will cost to achieve the look I want and how long it will take?	1.	Select a few local contractors and get a ballpark estimation of cost and timeframe.
2.	How can I make sure I don't get fooled or robbed?	2.	Find out the approximate average market cost in your local area before you decide on a budget. This gives you the power of negotiation with your contractor.
3.	Whom should I trust and how far should I trust a contractor?	3.	Trust those whose attitude is that the client is king – or queen – and make sure you have a strong contract.
4.	What type of planning should I do?	4.	Do your research, have an idea of project cost and know your own budget. Know the timeline you expect. Consider possible pitfalls that could arise. See our checklist: <a href="#">Solutions to Common Pitfalls</a>
5.	How do I know what type of quality is right for me?	5.	Consider your needs and your desires combined with the reality of your budget.
6.	How can I improve and individualize the final result by using my own creativity or DIY?	6.	Consult with your designer and browse ideas in magazines, websites and blogs such as: <a href="http://www.helpuremodel.com/nuggets">www.helpuremodel.com/nuggets</a> <a href="http://www.ikea.com/us/en/">www.ikea.com/us/en/</a>
7.	How can I make sure that the contractor is responsible for the performance of any subcontractors?	7.	Put it in your contract.
8.	How can I negotiate with my contractor?	8.	Know the terminology contractors use. Know the ballpark local cost. Don't be afraid to say when you don't understand. Make sure the contractor does not rush you but takes the time to sit and explain everything. Be specific and clear in your needs and wishes.
9.	Should I use a designer and can my designer take charge and manage the project?	9.	For larger projects a designer can save you time, money and produce a better end result. The designer should be checking the quality of work and products side by side with you, the client.
10.	How do I choose a designer?	10.	Make sure the designer is reliable, with a good reputation and references. Make sure you have the same aesthetic. The designer should offer a fair payment schedule, linked to the payment schedule of the contractor that protects you through to the end of the project. Schedule should be based on project progress rather than dates.
11.	How do I ascertain whether references are genuine?	11.	a) Referral from a friend b) Reviews from sites that are cross referenced – Yelp, Houzz, Better Business Bureau c) Listen to the contractor's answers to questions about other projects.

# STEP 1

## SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PITFALLS TO ENSURE A **HAPPY** REMODELING EXPERIENCE

POSSIBLE PITFALLS		SOLUTIONS	
1.	Going over budget.	1.	Declare your budget to be at least 15% less than you can actually afford.
2.	Feeling shy and uncomfortable because your budget is small.	2.	However small your budget, still declare it to be 15% less than you can afford. Don't feel pressured into going over. Stick to your plan.
3.	Feeling more like a victim than a client.	3.	Choose a contractor who believes that the client is king – or queen!
4.	Not planning for unexpected costs such as finding dry rot or termites.	4.	That is what the extra 15% is there to cover. Assume you will need it.
5.	Assuming that your plumbing, electrical circuits, subflooring etc. are adequate to support your remodel.	5.	Check with a specialist before going ahead, particularly if it is a big project. The fundamental structures may have to be upgraded. Better to find out before you embark on your project, not once you are committed.
6.	Assuming that you will be able to easily and frequently communicate with your contractor.	6.	2-way communication is vital. Make sure your contractor listens to you, as much as you listen to him. Make sure you feel comfortable with your contractor during the selection process.
7.	Letting your contractor act as a designer as well.	7.	Designing and contracting are two different jobs. Hire a designer who can monitor the contractor's work.
8.	Underestimating the time it takes to choose colors, finishes, appliances etc.	8.	Unless you are willing to spend your days, weekends and evenings looking at tiles and comparing faucets, hire a designer who will make the process smoother and quicker.
9.	Assuming that your contractor will not have conflicts with his subcontractors that can affect your timeline.	9.	Make sure your contract covers this and has a penalty clause if the project is not finished on time.
10.	Receiving lower quality than you were promised.	10.	Obtain a detailed breakdown on the scope of work of the products and brands to be used.
11.	Having difficulty getting the final touch ups finished off properly.	11.	Hold back the last payment until the final walk through and you are totally satisfied.
12.	Assuming your project will finish on time and planning an event accordingly.	12.	Always assume your project will take 50% longer. You will be far less stressed. Of course don't say this to your contractor! If it finishes on time, it is a bonus.