

Nine Tips for the Perfect Kitchen Remodel

(ARA) - For many Americans, remodeling their kitchens tops the list of home improvement projects - and for several good reasons. Not only is the kitchen the heart of many homes - the center of family activity and home entertaining - but remodeling your kitchen is typically one of the smartest investments, often generating a payback of 80 to 90 percent on the cost of remodel at the time of resale.



With thoughtful planning, remodeling your kitchen is within the capability of many homeowners who want to attempt a do-it-yourself project. But, because the kitchen is so central to most homes, is interconnected with other spaces such as the family and dining rooms, and because there is a fair amount of water (sink, dishwasher, garbage disposal) involved, a kitchen remodel project has the potential of going horribly wrong.

Here are nine tips from The Tile Shop (www.tileshop.com), one of the nation's largest tile retailers for do-it-yourselfers and kitchen remodeling professionals, on how to create the kitchen of your dreams:

1. Consider how you really use your space. The first step in planning your kitchen remodel is deciding what you want your kitchen to do for you, and how it reflects the way you live. Do you want an intimate place for drinking coffee and reading your daily newspaper, a large spacious kitchen that's perfect for entertaining, or a space that's ideal for family projects and homework?
2. Get ideas. Start your planning with a visit to a premium tile or cabinet store that offers displays that show the latest in kitchen design, including the use of floor, wall and countertop materials such as tiles, stone, and granite. Read home improvement magazines, check out kitchen remodeling books from the library, visit friends who have remodeled their kitchens recently and check out model homes to see the latest in kitchen design from today's homebuilders.
3. Make a plan. Consolidate your ideas and create a remodeling plan and a budget. If you're going to remodel it yourself, don't be afraid to seek out information on the latest in remodeling standards. For example, The Tile Shop offers how-to videos on its website, www.tileshop.com, and offers hands-on seminars at its stores. One simple rule of thumb though, no matter how much you budget for, add 20 percent to cover the unexpected costs that come up once you get into your project.
4. Bring it up to code. Check your town or city's website to review or download building code requirements related to kitchens - in particular codes for plumbing, electrical and windows. Even if you're doing it yourself, you may need to pull a permit from your local town or city and obtain an inspection(s) for some elements of your project, such as electrical work.
5. Include popular features. Include popular features in your kitchen remodeling project to help at resale time, and to give your kitchen a more contemporary look and feel. Second sinks, custom cabinetry, a second oven or microwave, an island, decorative glass and stone tile, more storage space, better lighting and extra-wide wall tiles are among the most popular features in today's homes.
6. Respect the "kitchen work triangle". The No. 1 complaint about most kitchens is that

they're difficult to work in. The kitchen work triangle is that imaginary line between the center of the refrigerator, the center of the cooktop and the center of sink. For maximum efficiency, the total distance of the lines that make up this triangle should be no more than 26 feet.

7. Keep it elegant. Focus on using materials and fixtures that exude quality, warmth, and timelessness. To create an elegant, more spacious look, consider marble or granite countertops, stainless steel appliances, adding more windows, mixing tile textures, sizes, colors, types (natural stone, ceramic, porcelain, glass), and embracing neutral colors and whites.

8. Reduce clutter. Everyone likes a spacious, clean kitchen. For many kitchens, the greatest challenge to achieving more space is cutting the clutter and hiding items that you don't want to see such as stacks of mail, overflowing junk drawers and cabinets bulging with unused pots and pans. To achieve a less cluttered look, keep the refrigerator door clean, avoid placing appliances too close together and creating tight spaces that are difficult to clean. Use large wall tiles to eliminate grout lines. And add storage to free up valuable counter-top space.

9. Green is in and here to stay. When remodeling your kitchen, consider using fixtures that save water, replace old windows with new energy-efficient windows, and consider installing counter tops, wall tiles and flooring made from recycled materials, such as recycled glass mosaic tile or natural stone products, which act as a natural insulator. Finally, don't forget to use the opportunity of remodeling to make space to recycle paper, cans, bottles and food scraps.

For more kitchen remodeling tips, visit www.tileshop.com.

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