

# PLANNING A HOME REMODEL

## *Part 2*



What You Need to Know to Successfully Plan  
for a Home Remodel

# How to Choose a Remodeler- Part 2

## What You Need to Know to Successfully Plan for a Home Remodel

By John Murphy

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This is a work of advice and opinion. Murphy Bros. is not responsible for actions based on this content. It should be used as a general guide and is not intended as a definitive source on the subject of home building. Moreover, materials, techniques, and codes are continuously changing, and the information printed here may not be the most current information available.



## Key Terms



**FIXED PRICE CONTRACT:** This is a legal document that guarantees a fixed price project, that covers a thoughtfully designed and planned out scope of work. Typically it includes detailed plans and a comprehensive specs that includes most if not all selections completed.

**FREE ESTIMATE:** This is a number some remodelers will give you that as a “contract price” used to win the job. After the job starts they will use Change Orders to reflect the real costs of allowances and “items not included” in the document, but it will be too late as the work has already begun. We never ask our clients to commit to a “Free Estimate.”

**BALL PARK RANGE:** This is not a single number, but a spread or a cost range we usually share with homeowners at the end of the initial “Discovery” meeting so they have some idea of what the project typically requires in terms of budget.

**BUDGET:** A summary scope and list of items to establish a preliminary cost for a project.

**COST PER SQUARE FOOT:** This is more useful in new construction and has limited usefulness with certain remodeling such as decks or additions. It is the total cost of a project divided by the number of square feet of the project. Useful for some budgeting exercises. (Example: \$150/sq. ft., vs. \$300/sq. ft.)

**EQUITY:** The value of your home less what you owe on it.

**FINISHES:** The hardware and materials applied to your home in the end phases of a building or remodeling project. Examples include countertops, light fixtures, floor covering, cabinets, and appliances. (The term stems from “finishing touches.”)

**SCOPE OF WORK:** A document that specifies the exact work to be accomplished, including the finishes and other materials. It is part of the building contract and is used as a guide for the people doing the work.

**SPECS:** Also part of the building contract and contains specifications for the materials used in the build. Used as a reference for producing a budget.

**TURN KEY:** When a remodel is completed and handed over to a customer com-



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## Don't Assume The Contractor Is Licensed

**Look for the contractor registration number in advertisements for contractors. The law requires this number to be included in all advertisements, including business cards and the websites.**

The easiest way to know more about a given contractor is to check your state's website. [You can do that in Minnesota here.](#)

**Look specifically for the following:**

- How long has the remodeler is been licensed?
- Do they have workers' compensation insurance for his or her employees?
- Are there any pending or past actions exist against a contractor's bond?
- Do they have other business names they have operated under in the past?
- Have they ever been cited for infractions?

Remember, a builder or remodeler can lose their license due to complaints, actions or a failed business and file for and get a new license years later.



Questions? Call us at 763-780-3262 or use this contact form.



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## What You Need to Like About Your Remodeler



You do not need to be best friends with your remodeler, but you do need to like their honesty, integrity, availability, credit, and organization. Admiring these qualities in your contractor is often more important than liking their personality, although the more you like about them the easier the job flows.

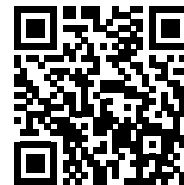
It is important to be working with truthful and organized people who pay their bills on time and sincerely want the best for you. Between initial meetings, design, selections and construction time you may be spending 6 months to a year working with them, so a comfortable, congenial working relationship is essential.

Before committing to anyone, make sure that you and the remodeler are a right fit for each other. Take full advantage of the initial interview with your potential remodeler to determine the following:

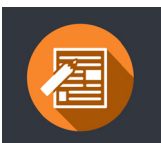
- [Satisfied clients](#)
- [Previous experience with your project type](#)
- [Similar Values](#)
- [Transparent working relationship](#)
- [A clearly defined process](#)
- [Competency](#)

Part of good communication is having regular communication to ensure that you and your builder are both on the “same page” and to diminish the likelihood of mistakes. Remodeling is inherently messy and always requires a fair amount of patience. Choosing a remodeler with a upbeat disposition and attentive listening skills can make even the most challenging and complex remodel an overall positive experience.

You can also review [our industry standard qualifications checklist](#) to help you interview multiple remodelers. However, homeowners we’ve talked to tell us three is the maximum number of remodelers they interview. More than that is just confusing and a waste of time.



Our Qualifications



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this contact form.