



Learn the 10 Things Nobody Tells You About Renovating Your Bathroom

Description

Renovations of any kind are a difficult task. However, when it comes to the bathroom—a space that must be both hyper-functional and tranquil, practical and, ideally, a little bit luxe—the stakes seem to be higher.



A million decisions are to be made along the route, from the mirror to the grout—and the cost can be unexpected. So what should you know before you start? Follow our advice:

Don't presume that you and your contractor are on the same page.

Above: A refurbished black-and-white bathroom in Soho; more on the project can be found in Nordic

Design Ambassador: Camilla Vest, a model and entrepreneur, is home in SoHo. Matthew Williams shot the photos for Remodelista, and Alexa Hotz styled them.

“When you’re acting as a general contractor—or even working with a general contractor—you have to explain out every component of the plan, and never assume everyone is on the same page,” the mother-daughter pair behind Matriarchy Build writes in *How to Avoid Rookie Remodeling Mistakes*. “A contractor we knew demoed the wrong bath,” they add.

Consider renovations to be surgery: to avoid getting the wrong knee replaced, make sure—then double-check, then triple-check, then once more—that the proper knee (or toilet) is identified and agreed upon.

How much does it cost to redesign a bathroom? More than you realize.

Think you can spruce up your bathroom from head to toe for a few thousand dollars? According to the National Kitchen and Bath Association, the average cost of a bathroom makeover in 2016 was \$11,364. (NKBA). A basic, low-cost restoration with less expensive materials or smaller swaps may cost between \$1,500 and \$5,000, while a top-of-the-line, top-to-bottom remodel could cost up to \$23,000.

According to the NKBA, the majority of this expense is attributed to fixtures and plumbing (approximately 29 percent), followed by counters and surfaces (21 percent), labor (20 percent), and cabinetry and hardware (10 percent) (16 percent). Keep in mind that your bathroom remodel should not cost more than 5 to 10% of the value of your home.

You might want to reconsider that eye-catching bathtub.

You might be tempted to add a stunning freestanding bath to your bathroom. However, it may not be the most practical option in the future, especially if you are petite, dislike cleaning, live in a shaky old house, enjoy long baths, or take more showers than baths. More on the advantages of built-in baths (and showers) over freestanding options may be found in *10 Things Nobody Tells You About Clawfoot Bathtubs* and *Remodeling 101: Romance in the Bath: Built-In vs. Freestanding Bathtubs*.

Planning is required for flattering lighting.

Don’t believe installing a few lights will suffice: because bathrooms are sometimes small, gloomy, and loaded with mirrors (which complicates how light bounces around), lighting takes careful planning and placement. A single diffuse light in the center of the ceiling is the most basic technique to illuminate a bath. Do you have a bathroom that is already quite bright? A couple of wall sconces should be enough. Are you considering ceiling-inset downlights? Avoid installing directly over bright-colored countertops (which will reflect the lights), and install near the wall above a vanity to optimize light when staring in the mirror. If you spend a lot of time doing cosmetics, think about installing vertical fluorescent lights on either side of the mirror.

Don't forget to include outlets that are easily accessible.

You don't want to conclude a renovation and realize you didn't think about the outlets. Consider this: you have to plug your hairdryer in across the room, and you can't see yourself in the mirror from there. Or perhaps you'd like to keep your electric toothbrush charged at all times but forgot to place an outlet in the medicine cabinet. Or perhaps you and your spouse share a bathroom but only have an outlet on one side of the vanity.

There are only a few varieties to remember when it comes to tiling.

Forget about the numerous stacks of tile samples your contractor will show you: you only need to know a few main types. Porcelain, glass, natural stone, cement, and, of course, subway tile (a form of ceramic tile so ubiquitous that it deserves its category) are the types of tile that are particularly tough, long-wearing, and ageless in the bath—in shower stalls, on floors, and walls. Once you've narrowed it down to these tried-and-true possibilities, you may pick a color and a form and continue from there.

The grout in your bathroom may make or break it.

Above: Dark grout reduces the visibility of grime in this week's Bathroom of the Week: In Auckland, two bathrooms were remodeled using a bold green tile. Neeve Woodward's photograph is courtesy of Katie Lockhart Studio.

Grout may be an afterthought in the grand scheme of your remodel: it's a little and, as Meredith points out in *Remodeling 101: How to Choose the Right Tile Grout*, an unsexy component of the bathroom. "It seals out dirt and water, compensates for slight size discrepancies between individual tiles, and tightens up the structural integrity of an installation," she adds.

How do you choose the best grout for your bathroom? First, answer the following questions: Do you want the grout to be visible or blend in with the tile? Is the grout in a high-splash zone or a relatively dry location? (If it gets wet a lot, such as in a shower cubicle, use synthetic grout; otherwise, use cementitious grout.) Will soiled grout drive you insane? (If so, stay away from white.)

Do you have a limited amount of space? There is a small toilet for that.

Toilets do not come in one size that fits all; if you have a tiny room, try a petite toilet. Alternatively, choose a traditional or modern floor-standing toilet, water-saving toilet, or wall-mounted toilet.

Storage should not be an afterthought.

So much of building a bathroom that seems both serene and functional is about having enough storage. When designing your designs, search for storage opportunities, even modest and simple, to make them feel integrated rather than added-on. "I like to install a pair of tall shallow cabinets

disguised in a stud bay,” architect Malcolm Davis adds. You don’t need deep shelf storage; a modest shelf would suffice. I prefer to construct a recess in the shower and attempt to incorporate towel bars to make it feel more built-in.”

You may not even need to remodel.

Perhaps you’ve moved into a new home and despise the tile in the bathroom but don’t have the funds to change it entirely. Perhaps you are renting and cannot remodel (if you want your security deposit back, that is). The good news is that you may not have to demo everything and start from scratch. Instead, consider tile refinishing if you wish to update the tile.

Category

1. Home Services

Date Created

February 2022

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