

Kitchen Remodel Survival Kit

The decision to remodel your kitchen or bathroom is an exciting one, but it is usually made with at least a little hesitancy. There are many unknowns when first beginning your project – you have to determine an appropriate budget, find the right contractor, plan for the disruptions, and more. Many homeowners feel justifiably overwhelmed by the prospects of a remodeling project and aren't sure where to turn to get answers to their questions. To help you with this process, we have prepared this *Kitchen Remodel Survival Kit*.



Our *Kitchen Remodel Survival Kit* is based on our team's many years of experience in the kitchen and bath industry – from home center to independent contractor. We present a step-by-step planning guide and useful tools to help you survive the chaos and plan a project that will give you many years of enjoyment.

Gather Ideas

Many homeowners think this is the easiest part of the project, and as a result, it is the one that most often gets the least attention. Design ideas come from a number of valuable resources such as TV shows and advertisements, newspaper flyers, and magazine articles. These ideas are very personal and reflect individual style and taste as well needs and wants. Much like a snowflake, no two kitchen projects will ever have exactly the same requirements or identical layouts.

You will need to create a folder for your design ideas. This folder should contain:

- Magazine and newspaper articles, pictures, and advertisements that show styles and functional elements that you like.
- Pictures of your existing space and the rooms that lead into it.
- Pictures of other areas of your home that are representative of your style and taste.
- Accurate measurements of the space you plan to remodel.

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Establish Priorities – Needs, Wants, and Desires

To help plan your budget, you need to develop a list of “Needs”, “Wants”, and “Desires.” This list helps you prioritize the styles and functional elements you want to see in your new kitchen and ultimately stay within your budget. To create this list, we recommend the following steps:



- Make a list of everything you don't like about your current kitchen. Once you think you have a pretty good list of “dislikes” - you can always add more later - take a few minutes to number this list with one being the most important change you need to make.
- Go through all of the design ideas you have gathered and make a second, separate list of every design and functional element you want to see in your new kitchen. Be sure to leave room for new ideas that may come up as you're shopping. Draw three columns to the right of your list labeled “Need”, “Want”, and “Desire.”
- With your list of “dislikes” close by, begin going through your list of new features. For each one, if it clearly addresses one of the things you dislike about your current kitchen, put a check in the “Need” column. If it does not, put a check in the “Want” column for something that adds value or a check in the “Desire” column if it is simply an “oh wow” item, like decorative molding or chocolate glaze. This is one of the most important steps and the challenge here is to remain honest with yourself.
- Prioritize all of the items in each of “Needs”, “Wants” and “Desires” columns beginning with one as the most important. Compare the item to what it “fixes” from your first list to help determine how important it might be. You might need to repeat this step a couple of times to make sure you are happy with the order.
- Rewrite the entire list, in the order you have just selected. This last step may seem trivial, but it gives you a final opportunity to make changes and adds a little piece of mind that you were thorough.

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Establish Your Budget

Industry studies suggest that a typical kitchen remodeling project budget should be between 10% and 20% of your home's current market value. As a rule, well-planned projects in this price range can return up to 90% of the project cost when you decide to sell your home. For a home valued at \$200,000, a good starting point for your budget would be \$20,000 to \$40,000 for a complete renovation, including:



- New cabinetry and countertops (About 50% of your total budget)
- New flooring (10%)
- New appliances (10%)
- New sink, faucet, and disposal (5%)
- Labor for removal and installation (25%)

As you begin thinking about your budget, use the 10% to 20% rule as a starting point to clearly set the maximum you are willing to spend on your project. Then begin looking at the value of homes in your neighborhood and try to talk with friends that may have recently completed a remodeling project. Care must be taken not to price your home well out of the market by investing much more in your new kitchen than you can hope to get back if you were to sell.

This should allow you to come up with an initial budget that is somewhat less than your maximum. For example, the budget range for your \$200,000 home would be \$20,000 to \$40,000, and you decide that \$30,000 is your personal maximum. After talking with friends and considering neighboring home values, you could potentially set your initial budget at \$25,000 for your project.

Keep in mind that these estimates represent national averages and prices will vary by region of the country.

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Select a Vendor / Contractor

Independent cabinet dealers are often the best choice for your kitchen remodeling project because they specialize in kitchens and bathrooms. They generally have selections that are as big as or bigger than “big box” stores, and well-run operations will offer competitive pricing. Perhaps the biggest selling point for independent cabinet dealers is their highly experienced staff, many of whom “graduated” from their entry-level training at a home center. This experience and single-purpose allow them to deliver exceptional customer service.



Creating a list of potential dealers can be challenging. A referral from a friend or neighbor is often a great choice. The Internet and phone book are also great places to find local dealers. You will then need to pre-screen these potential contractors by phone or email to create a list of two or three candidates. Some questions you should ask include:

- **Where have you recently completed a project similar to mine?**
They should be able to give you several actual addresses within a reasonable driving distance.
- **Can you provide references?**
They should be able to provide several, and you should check at least two to three references. A great question to ask a reference – “Would you use the dealer again?”
- **Do you have before and after photos of your work?**
It is very helpful if they have these pictures posted on their website.
- **Do you charge a design fee or design “deposit”?**
You should never expect to pay a design fee before you see the design!
- **How would you describe your sales process?**
If they can’t describe a process, or if it has more than four steps, run away!
- **What is your quality control process after the job is complete?**
The contractor or one of their quality control staff should inspect the completed job with you and correct any deficiencies that are discovered.

Once you have your “short list” of potential dealers, you are ready to pick the one you feel most comfortable with and begin the design phase of your project.

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Obtain Designs and Quotes

At last, the fun begins! You get to begin shopping for a brand new design for your kitchen.

As you begin working with a designer, keep in mind that you will be working with a well-trained professional who should be working to turn your dreams into reality.

Clearly share your vision for your new space and what you are planning to accomplish while building a relationship of trust with your designer. It is equally

important to ensure that your designer is shaping your vision for the space, not theirs.



You must be completely honest with your designer on your budget, project timeline, and design considerations. You should be available for phone and email correspondence at least a couple of times a day during the design phase of your project and should return requested information quickly. Most homeowners are surprised to learn that little items like hardware selections can significantly delay an entire remodeling project.

Soon, you will receive your completed design and quote. Your primary goal should be to find a plan that clearly matches your vision. Although it is common for minor design changes to be necessary, you should see a layout that closely resembles your vision. Keep in mind that kitchen and bath design is part artistry and part science. Your salesperson understands local building codes that might make some of your wishes prohibitively expensive if not impossible. Don't hesitate to ask to see alternative design ideas or styles if minor elements in their plan fail to meet your expectations.

Obviously, an important second consideration is price – the design must fall within your budget range. As you are thinking about the quote, try to avoid scrutinizing every line in the proposal so long as the total is within your budget. It's OK for your contractor to make a reasonable amount of money on your project as long as you love the design and are satisfied with the price. It is also good to remember that your designer invested their knowledge, talent, and artistry in planning your new kitchen. Although you might be tempted to shop their design to other contractors looking for a little savings, the process is rarely worth the effort.

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Plan for the Chaos

We've all seen the yellow crime scene tape - "Police Line – Do Not Cross!" Your kitchen will probably be off limits for several days, weeks, or even longer. Although your contractor should provide a time estimate for your project, many people are still caught off-guard when they're displaced from the room in their house that everyone depends on.

What to Expect

- Plan on it being loud during working hours – There is a lot of noise associated with removing and installing cabinets.
- Without a kitchen you may not be able to prepare meals.
- You will likely have limited or no access to your refrigerator and oven.
- You will probably have to get your drinking water from somewhere other than the kitchen sink or refrigerator door.
- Utensils, plates, and cookware along with common cooking spices (like salt and pepper) will most surely be out of reach.
- With construction and demolition, there is a lot of dust and it gets everywhere!
- If installers have to come through your house, chances are they'll track in some dirt.

Practical Solutions

- Do you know someone who has a portable microwave you could put in another room?
- If you can have a friend check in, this might be a good week to go on vacation.
- Many people treat it like a camping trip. Do you know someone who owns a camper or an RV?
- Eat out once a day and keep some easy-to-make sandwiches and bottled water handy.
- Are you able to wheel your refrigerator or a mini-fridge into a nearby room (temporarily)? If not, you might want to keep a cooler with drinks and ice handy.
- Pack a box with common items needed for simple meals
 - Utensils, plastic cups, salt, pepper
 - Paper plates, plastic utensils...
- You may consider cleaning your dishes in a bathroom sink.
- The outdoor grill might become your new best friend.
- Many installers already do this but if yours doesn't – tape plastic barriers in your doorways to seal off the construction area from the rest of the house.
- If the only entrance to your kitchen is through your house, lay down cardboard for the installation team to walk on. You may even be able to use the boxes your cabinets came in!

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Inspect What You Expect

After what may feel like an eternity, your kitchen cabinets have arrived and the installation is about to begin! This exciting phase of your project is also the beginning of one of the most critical and often overlooked aspects – Inspection. Inspecting your new kitchen cabinets before, during and after installation can prevent some common kitchen remodeling nightmares. You should have a copy of your new kitchen layout, material lists, quote, and any drawings that were provided to you and begin the inspection now.



Before the Installation

You might be surprised to know that some homeowners have walked into their beautiful new kitchen for the first time, looked around with pride at their new cabinetry, and then come to the numbing realization that the door style is wrong. Before the installation begins, you should confirm that the cabinets that were delivered match the door style, wood species, and color that you ordered. If you notice any discrepancies with these items, you should stop the installation and contact your designer immediately. This is also a great time to begin looking at the quality of the cabinets. Look for any cracked cabinet frames, doors or drawers. Consider using blue painters' tape on anything you want to draw attention to – It's easy to write a note on the tape too.

During the Installation

There is a fine line between observing and interfering with the work, and it's safe to say many people just don't like being watched while they're working. You should try hard to stay out of the way of the installers but don't be afraid to ask questions. If you can, try to gage their stress level. If they seem frustrated, chances are there may be a design or installation issue they are being asked to fix as they go. You should see a neat, well-kept, and professional work area and consistent progress according to the installation plan. Although it is critical to avoid being a distraction while you're observing, don't be afraid to speak up if you see something you think is wrong.

After the Installation

Once the installation is complete, you should take a final, detailed look at the cabinets with your installer. It is often best to begin by looking at the overall alignment of the cabinets, paying particular attention to where they meet the walls on either end of a "run." Joints on trim and molding should be clean and tight. As you begin inspecting the doors, drawer frames and finish, don't be alarmed by blemishes, scratches, cracks or damage. Mark the problem area with your painters' tape and

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communicate the issue to your designer. They often have replacement parts in stock and can certainly order them if necessary. If an item arrived damaged or if it was damaged during the installation, you should expect it to be replaced at no charge to you.

The doors and drawers should all be uniform and in near-perfect alignment. If you see any that are crooked, the installer can usually make a minor adjustments to get them lined up. Open and close **every** door and drawer looking for smooth travel without rubbing and confirm that they close with a soft bump. If you have upgraded to soft-close doors and/or drawers, test them out by closing them with a little force. Open the base cabinets and check the pull out trays and other accessories. If you added a Lazy-Susan, give it a spin to make sure it's working properly. It is important to inspect all moving parts.

The Finished Product

After years of settling, most homes have very few perfectly straight walls and right angles when a remodeling project begins. A skilled cabinet installation team can usually make minor adjustments so you'll never even know there was an issue to begin with and achieve that "custom fit" look that is so desirable.

To ensure the best result with your project, begin the inspection process before the first cabinet is hung and follow along during the entire process. If you discover a problem along the way, communicate it to your installer, designer or dealer immediately. Reputable cabinet dealers depend on referrals and word-of-mouth advertising and are usually eager to resolve any issues that are discovered.

Helpful Tools

- Kitchen and Bathroom Planning Worksheet
- How to Measure Your Space
- Worksheet – "Things I Dislike about My Kitchen"
- Worksheet – "Needs, Wants, and Desires"
- Budget Worksheet

Kitchen/Bath Design Planner

YOUR INFORMATION					
Name:					
Address:					
Home Phone:			Cell Phone:		
Fax Number:			Email:		
Type of Project			Approximate Time Frame		
<input type="checkbox"/> Remodel		<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction		Start Date:	Completion Date:
Which room(s) will this plan be for?					
<input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen		<input type="checkbox"/> Master Bath		<input type="checkbox"/> Guest/Child Bath	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Which problem are you looking to fix?					
<input type="checkbox"/> Space		<input type="checkbox"/> Function		<input type="checkbox"/> Style / Appearance	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
What is your budget?					
<input type="checkbox"/> Under \$5,000		<input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000-\$10,000		<input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000-\$30,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 +
How many people does your room need to accommodate?					
<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5		<input type="checkbox"/> 6-10		<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Which word best describes your style?					
<input type="checkbox"/> Modern		<input type="checkbox"/> Distinct	<input type="checkbox"/> Refined	<input type="checkbox"/> Simple	<input type="checkbox"/> Inviting
Floor Type?					
<input type="checkbox"/> Tile	<input type="checkbox"/> Vinyl	<input type="checkbox"/> Carpet	<input type="checkbox"/> Wood	<input type="checkbox"/> Cement	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Will your floor be changed during this project? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				If yes, what type?	
Wall Construction?					
<input type="checkbox"/> Drywall	<input type="checkbox"/> Wallpaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Plaster	<input type="checkbox"/> Paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Paneling	<input type="checkbox"/> Brick/Stone
Room Details					
What do you like about your room?					
What do dislike about your room?					
Approximate age of your house:			Special Considerations:		

Items to include with this planner:

1. Measurements of the room(s) being planned
2. Pictures of the existing space
3. Design Ideas - Magazine clippings, model home pictures, pictures from the internet, etc.
4. Examples of colors, materials, and surfaces that you like.
5. Examples of up-grades that you would like to see.

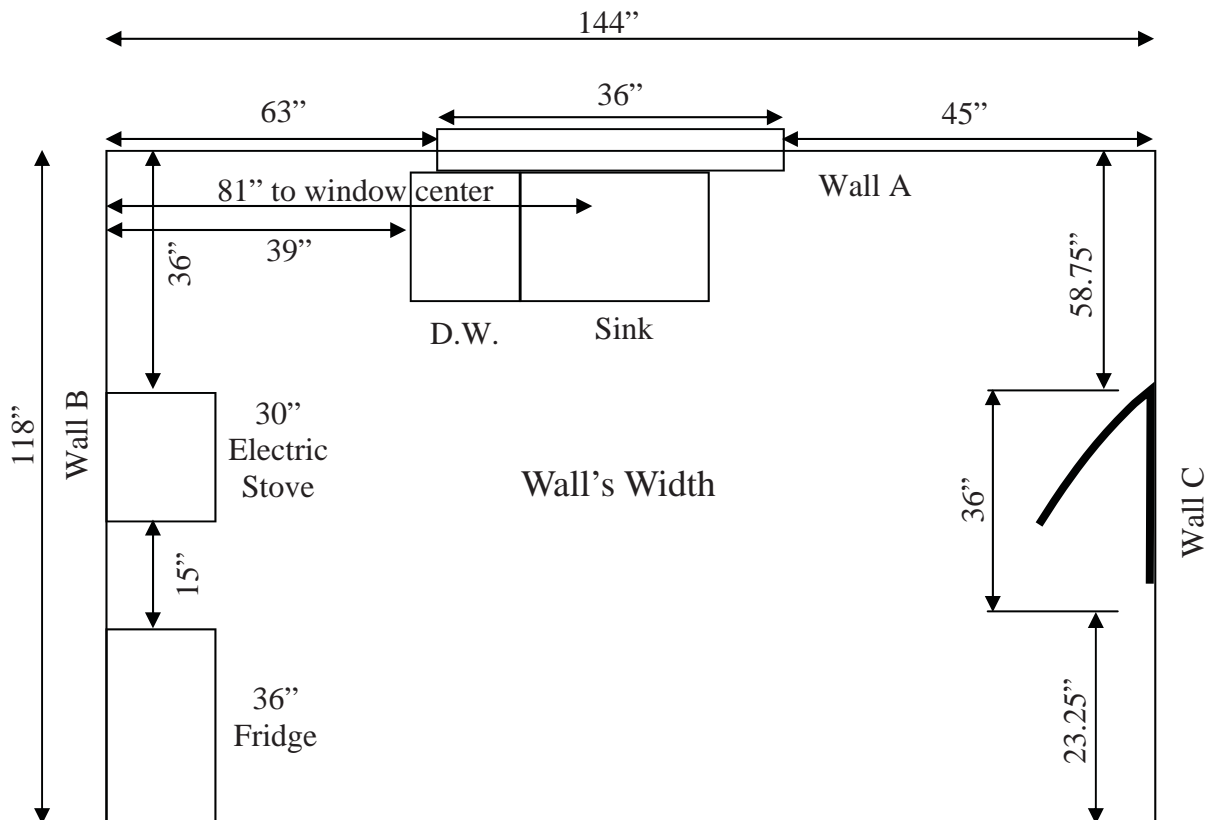
Measuring Your Space

Every remodeling contractor will need measurements of your space in order to give you a reasonable quote. Anyone can measure their space if they follow the following steps. Measure at least to the nearest 1/4" or smaller. Take your time and measure twice.

Wall's Width

1. Measure the wall's length. Take 2 measurements, one near the floor and one near the ceiling.
2. Measure from the corner to any obstacles on the wall. (i.e. window or door)
3. Measure your obstacle's finished size.
4. Measure from the obstacle to the other end of the wall.
5. If applicable, measure the placement of any appliance, plumbing or electrical locations. (Same starting place as step #2)
6. Repeat process on each wall of room.

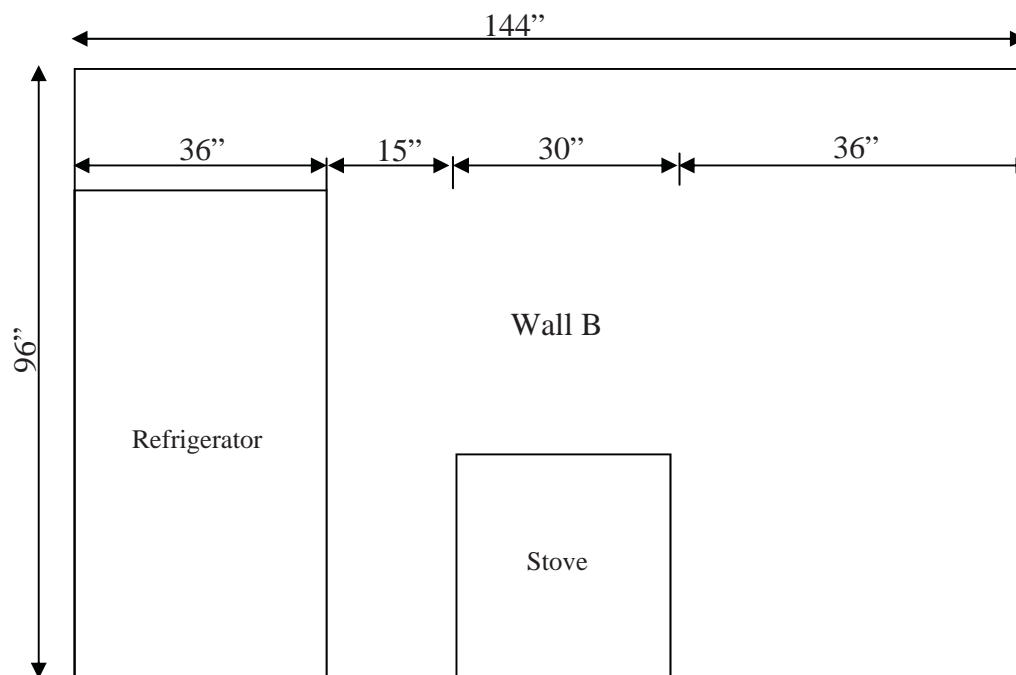
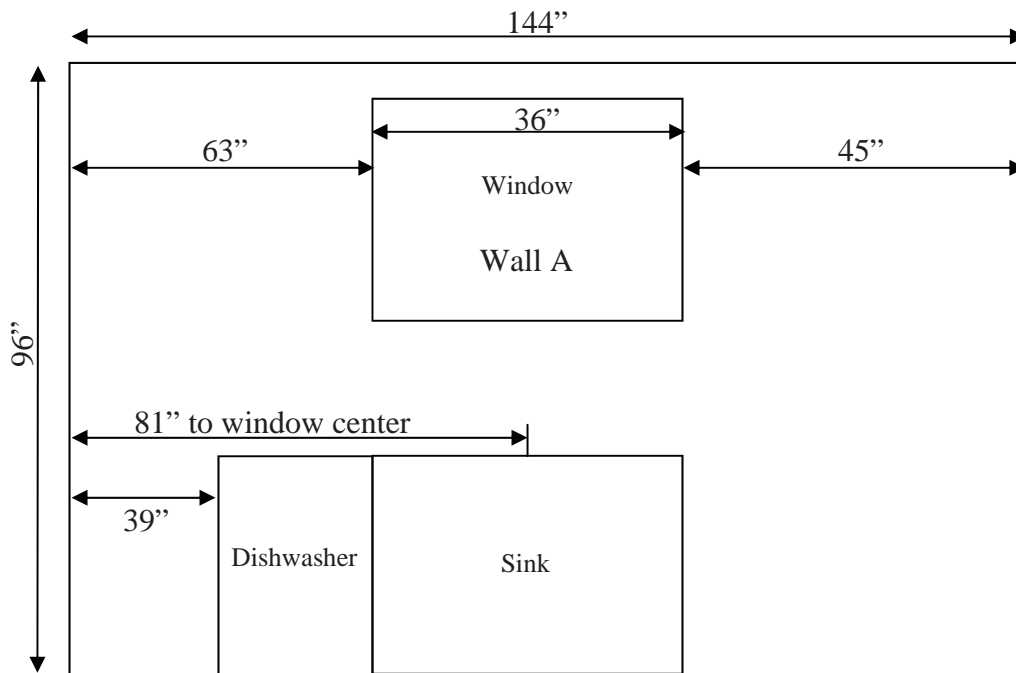
Your drawings could look something like this:



Wall's Height

1. Measure from floor to ceiling
2. Measure height of windows and other openings.
3. Measure from top of window or opening to ceiling.

Your drawings could look something like these examples:



Budget Worksheet

Sample

Home Market Value	\$200,000	Minimum	Maximum	Budget
Cabinets and Countertops	50.00%	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$13,000
Sink, Faucet, and Disposal	5.00%	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$1,200
Appliances	10.00%	\$2,000	\$4,000	\$2,400
Flooring	10.00%	\$2,000	\$4,000	\$3,000
Labor (Removal and Installation)	25.00%	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$7,500
Other (Electrical, plumbing, etc.)				
Total Project		\$20,000	\$40,000	\$27,100

In our example, the suggested minimum budget is 10% of your homes market value; the maximum amount is 20%. Your actual minimum and maximum amounts may be different and should reflect trends in your neighborhood and community and your personal financial plans for the project. The percentage allocation for each aspect of the total project is also based on industry averages - Your's may vary.

YOUR BUDGET

Home Market Value	_____	Minimum	Maximum	Budget
Cabinets and Countertops		_____	_____	_____
Sink, Faucet, and Disposal		_____	_____	_____
Appliances		_____	_____	_____
Flooring		_____	_____	_____
Labor (Removal and Installation)		_____	_____	_____
_____		_____	_____	_____
_____		_____	_____	_____
_____		_____	_____	_____
Total Project		_____	_____	_____