

Save on Home Improvements

By Jeff Cooper

Home remodeling projects are limited only by your creativity and your budget. Here are some ideas on how to stretch your dollars when it's time to improve your home:

1. Start by thinking of the simplest solution. If your current kitchen cabinets are structurally sound, you can save thousands of dollars by painting them and putting on new knobs, instead of replacing them. Or you may not need to add on a whole new bathroom. Putting in a skylight can make your existing bathroom seem larger. Installing a double sink also might allow you to put off adding a new bathroom.
2. Know what adds value. Energy saving alterations – including upgraded appliances, new furnaces and air conditioners, extra insulation, and energy-efficient windows – will save on energy bills while boosting your home's value.
3. Make sure what you buy will do the job. For instance, independent firms rate doors and windows to determine how well they keep out drafts. Also match the capacity of a furnace or water heater to your needs before purchasing. And determine that cabinets can easily handle the weight of what you'll be placing in them.
4. Get input on your ideas before starting. Your contractor, a handy neighbor, or hardware store employee may be able to show you a cheaper or easier way to reach your goal.

Some owners who want an extra room are putting traditional, lower ceilings in their two-story family rooms. What once was seen as an impressive feature now is viewed as being hard to clean, and a waste of space. Instead, they add a room on the second floor.

STEP BY STEP

Decide if you want to do a big project all at once, or in stages. Taking a remodeling project one step at a time lets you live with a series of small changes in a room.

Rather than replacing the flooring and wall covering together, do one first and then decide how to proceed. Painting or wallpapering walls can make a room look different, so your plans may need to change as well.