



Kitchen Remodel: 4 Prep Steps for Construction

Day one of kitchen remodeling work won't leave you in a flurry when you follow these guidelines ahead of time

There are two actions that come to mind as being the most important in getting ready for a construction project: Avoid denial and prepare. Everything you need to do falls under one of these two categories. But how, specifically, can you prepare for the first day of construction? Here are the basic steps.

1. Make a list of all the items you need to have onsite when construction begins. Have you picked out the sink and faucet? Do you have your appliance delivery scheduled? The reason for this is that once work starts, life gets a little more chaotic — OK, a lot more chaotic. Things like ordering a sink will slip through your fingers, and you'll find yourself scrambling when the contractor asks for something.

2. Establish expectations with contractor. This isn't just about telling the contractor what *you* expect, this is also about the contractor and other professionals letting you know what are realistic expectations. This will make for a happier client and a more pleasant process overall.

As the homeowner, you actually do have some control over the schedule. Taking too long to finalize decisions can cause significant delays. Here are some things to consider and discuss with your contractor:

- • How long will the overall construction last?
- • Ask your contractor what *you* can do to guard against delays. Oftentimes this means having all the product onsite and not designing in the field and making changes.
- • Discuss dust control. How will the construction be sectioned off from the rest of the house?
- • Discuss debris removal. Are you getting a Dumpster, or will debris be stored in the garage and removed in phases?
- • What areas can the crew use? What will be the staging area for tools, cutting wood and tile? What bathroom facilities will be available?

- • What are the cleanup expectations? Some contractors clean up at the end of each day, while others don't. Communicate what you want, but understand that certain requests may mean more time or expense.
- • When will you have to be out of the house for refinishing of floors? And for how long? What products will be used? Do they meet your expectations of low-VOC emissions?
- • What hours are OK for the crew to work? Can they work Saturdays? Arrange for things like keys and alarm codes.

Don't forget to be nice to the neighbors and tell the contractor to do the same. Let the neighbors know you're starting a construction project and that there will be crews around. Tell them to please let you know if they have issues. Noise, debris and blocking the street with deliveries are often issues that come up with neighbors.

Set up a recurring weekly construction meeting to touch base with your contractors and other pros. You may not need it every week, but at least it's on the schedule in case you do.

3. Empty out your cabinets. So now that you've taken care of business, it's time to get your hands dirty. Rather than dreading this, look at it as an opportunity to do some serious spring cleaning. Instead of throwing everything in a bunch of boxes and deferring the editing process to the end, get it done now to make moving back in that much more fun. However, if you've got too much on your plate to deal with this now, it can always be done later.

Put all the items you won't need for a few months into boxes — or even better, big plastic bins with lids to protect the contents from dirt and dust. Separate what you'll want to use in your temporary kitchen: knives, coffee mugs, food you'll actually eat and even a few wineglasses so you don't feel like you're really depriving yourself. Who says you have to drink out of plastic cups the whole time?

4. Set up a temporary kitchen. The more organized and prepared you are in this area, the happier you'll be. A half-hearted attempt at a temporary kitchen isn't recommended. Even if you don't have kids and plan to eat out every night, you'll want a place to make a cup of coffee or a snack.

I think two tables are ideal, and if you have the room, two tables plus the kitchen table for seating. If you don't have an old table, pick up a few

folding tables — 24 or 30 inches deep by whatever length you can fit (not the 48-inch square ones, which are too deep to use as countertops). If you're using a table from the house, get a plastic-coated tablecloth to protect it.

Think about setting up your temporary kitchen the way you would a real kitchen, in stations:

- Set up a station for cooking and prep. Include a microwave, a toaster oven, and even a hot plate if that's something you'll use. Also have out a big cutting board for making sandwiches and cutting fruit.
- Have the contractor set up your old refrigerator in the temporary kitchen area.
- Store food in large, clear plastic bins with lids under the table.
- Set out an area for paper plates, napkins and utensils. Think of your temporary kitchen like a campsite or an outdoor picnic or party spot. The nicer and more organized it is, the happier and calmer you'll feel during construction.

The better prepared you are to survive construction, the smoother it will go in the end. Try to start eating at home in the beginning, so by the time you really feel the need to get out of the house, you won't feel you're over the eating out thing. And keep in mind, at the end of this, you'll have the kitchen of your dreams!