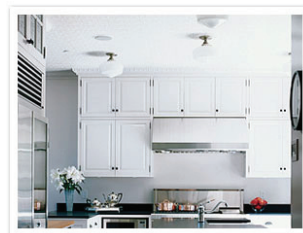




## Kitchen Remodel Project Guide



### Project Stages

- 2..... Initial Steps
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## PROJECT STAGES: Initial Steps

### Scope & Layout

Are you looking to add to your finished square footage or just make your current basement more functional? do you want to start over and make it completely new space, or enhance what's already there? Can you add windows, drywall, and new flooring? Imagine your ideal, blow-away basement and how it will look.

- Start with function. What do you plan to do in your remodeled basement? Go to our style guide page (9) to get an idea of what you want, and how to accomplish it.
- If your project is fairly extensive, look into hiring a basement designer. This professional can help bring your ideas to life, and will likely impress you with some ideas of their own.
- Determine your level of "Green". You don't have to be a tree-hugger to want to save money on energy bills or to make your remodeling choices safe for your family.

### Remodel or Renovate: Knowing the Difference

Homeowners often use the terms "remodel" and "renovate" interchangeably and this isn't correct.

- Remodeling is updating. Putting in new counters, new cabinets, new hardware, new appliances, new flooring, repainting, new fixtures, etc.
- Renovating is reworking. This includes all the things in remodeling, but also knocking down walls, expanding the size, bumping out windows, moving plumbing, electrical, and gas lines, and basically reconfiguring the entire space which often includes reconfiguring adjacent space.

Renovations are massive overhauls of the current space: re-envisioning, reworking, renovating. Remodeling, while still a big project, typically keeps the same kitchen footprint. It is important that you determine which one you are pursuing and use the correct language with your contractors and builders so that they know what you are looking for.

### Research What's Out There

Take your raw ideas and give them some shape, color, and texture by seeing what's out there.

- Spend time with our materials guide to see what options are available.
- Get some home magazines and cut out everything that appeals to you.
- Take a spin through some home stores, showrooms, and Home Shows.
- Be sure to check out our User Advice pages for tips and advice from Contractors, Basement Designers, and Homeowners who have done this before.
- Whatever you find that you like, put it in a "design ideas" folder for your contractor.
- If you need some inspiration online, check out our Design Gallery.

### Unleash Your Inner Accountant

Now that you have everything you want, let's start to narrow the field to what you can afford, or what you are willing to pay for.

### Finishes & Fixtures

The cost difference between stock and custom cabinets can be significant, much the same as laminate flooring and stained concrete. So think about all of the details where you don't mind a standard option, and the places where you are firm on what you want. If you prepare a range of options for each item in your basement remodel, you will give yourself some wiggle room on any budget.

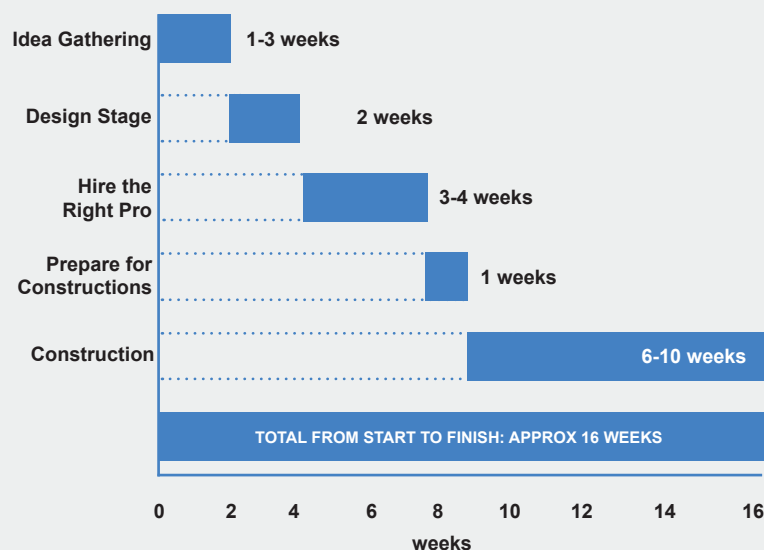
### The All Important Budget

You need a budget. Whether you are obtaining financing or if you have a rich uncle, budgets keep you, your designer, and your contractor on the right path. Not sure about the cost of your kitchen remodel? Use our ballpark estimator to help get a good sense of what your ideas are going to cost.

### Your Timeline

Finally, when do you want work to start, and when do you want your basement remodel to be completed? The below chart is the timeline for a typical basement remodel.

#### Estimated Timeline for Kitchen Remodel



## PROJECT STAGES: Find the Right Contractor

### Choosing a Pro — The Interview

Once you have your list of matching pros, you should make sure you are consistent when interviewing them. Use our Contractor Comparison Worksheet (Appendix A) complete with everything you need to make sure you are comparing apples-to-apples, which includes:

- Important questions to ask you Pro
- Questions for references
- Checklist for interviewing Pros consistently

### Tips for Evaluating Bids and Avoiding “Low-Ball” Offers:

- There is a world of difference between a “free” two-paragraph estimate and one that is five pages long with all aspects of the project spelled out. Get the details on paper!
- This is a great time to see if you can work harmoniously with your contractor – is he willing to spend the time to educate you on the process and all the options?
- What did the contractor’s references say about cost overruns? Factor this in.
- Have you covered everything? Look at your cutouts, sketches, and fixture lists – are they all on the bid?
- Don’t rely on “Allowances” – if the bid allows \$4,000 for cabinets, ask your Pro to show you what \$4,000 cabinets look like. This will prevent unpleasant surprises down the road.
- Price is not everything! Do you like and trust this Pro? Is there something fishy about him? Trust your instincts and only hire someone who feels right for you.

### Choosing a Pro — Hiring

You’ve done your homework and have settled on the right Pro for you. Despite appearances, there’s still some work to do to make sure you get off on the right foot. Use our 10 Steps for Hiring Service Professionals guide (Appendix B) to make sure you have your i’s dotted and your t’s crossed.

### Choosing a Pro — Contracts

Now you need to make sure that your expectations coincide with your Pros, and this is where the contract comes in. Check out our Contracts with Contractors: The Big Issues article (Appendix C) for explanations of the various sections of a typical remodeling contract. For a quick take on what you should be thinking about, see our Contract Checklist below.

#### A Good Contract:

- ☐ Should be written on company letterhead
- ☐ Should contain the company’s name, address, phone numbers, and license number
- ☐ Includes a detailed description of the work that is going to be performed
- ☐ Provides dollar amounts associated with each task included in the project
- ☐ Includes an anticipated/estimated start and finish date
- ☐ Provides a payment schedule
- ☐ Includes a termination clause
- ☐ Protects the homeowner from mechanics liens once you have paid the contractor in full
- ☐ Clearly states whether permits will be pulled, and who will be responsible for pulling them
- ☐ Details the process for change orders

### ServiceMagic’s 10-Point Screening

ServiceMagic is your source for finding prescreened and top-rated service professionals. It’s our goal to provide you with up to four professionals that have been 10-point screened, which means that we have done the following to ensure that you find the right pro for your project:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Verify Trade License                   | 6 Bankruptcy Search                             |
| 2 Verify Insurance                       | 7 Legal Search for Civil Judgments              |
| 3 Verification of State Business Filings | 8 Liens Search                                  |
| 4 Criminal Records Search                | 9 Identity Verification (SSN)                   |
| 5 Sex Offender Search                    | 10 Identity Verification (Reverse Phone Lookup) |

## PROJECT STAGES: Construction to Completion

### During Construction

Once you've scheduled the work and nailed down the ground rules, now you need to put on your project manager's hat. One way to keep things on track and stay in the loop is to have progress meetings with your project supervisor or contractor.

### Progress Meetings

A progress meeting is a time to review questions, make decisions, and talk about changes to the scope of the remodel. You can have these meetings as frequently as every day or once a week for longer projects. Make sure your contractor is on board and knows that you want to have a forum for voicing concerns or making changes.

### Schedule of Payments

There are no hard and fast rules as to how a contractor collects his or her fees. Some don't collect until the work is completed, while others ask for 50 percent upfront. The average is three payments:

- The first payment is commonly due when the bulk of materials are delivered
- The second payment is due when the job is half complete
- Another 20 percent when the job is essentially complete

Paying your Pro is tricky - you don't want to pay and then have them absent for extended periods, but you also don't want to withhold and have the same result. See our Arranging Payment For Home Improvement Work article (Appendix D) for more on how to manage this process so you and your contractor are both as happy as clams.

### Prepare for Construction: Ground Rules

It's hard to have your kitchen under construction, as it's not just the food center, it's also the most used room in the house and a common gathering place for the family. Here are some things to consider when trying to make this process as smooth as possible:

- Map out the path the contractors will take from your door to the bathroom and protect the floor with carpet scraps, old towels, or plastic.
- Decide when you want work to begin and end each day and if they can work weekends. Realize that being temporarily inconvenienced by workers arriving early and staying late will likely complete the project quickly.
- If you have pets, decide what you will do with them to stay out of the contractor's way.
- Decide if you want everything cleaned up at the end of each day. Remember that for longer projects, cleaning each day can extend the completion date.
- Think about where the contractor will park his vehicle and, if needed, where the dumpster will be placed.
- If walls are being opened or worked on, have a plan for minimizing dust and debris – taping some plastic over the door can help keep the dust contained.
- Remove anything you can from the kitchen right down to the dishes you only use once a year.
- Designate where they will draw their electrical power from.
- Decide if your contractor can use your bathroom and telephone.
- Offer water or a beverage to workers when possible.
- Bribery isn't a bad idea – donuts and coffee can earn you points that you can cash in during the project.

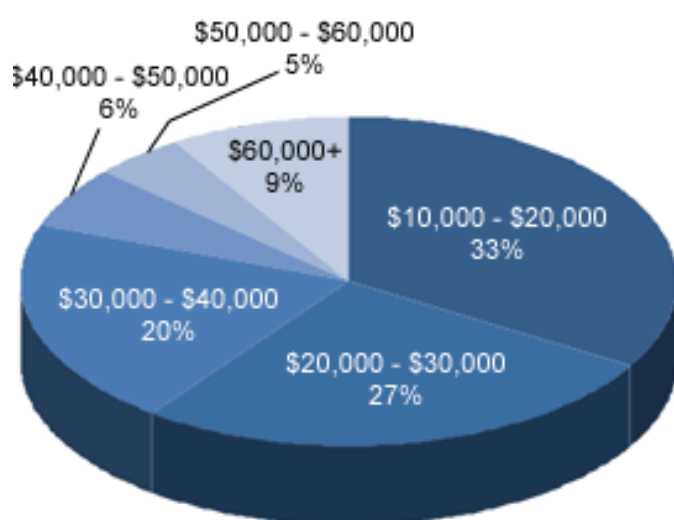




## UNDERSTANDING COSTS: Range of Cost

If you're just looking for a ballpark estimate to help create your budget, we have some numbers to get you started. Below is a nationwide average cost for kitchen remodels, based on feedback from ServiceMagic homeowners.

### Average Kitchen Remodel Cost



### The Dreaded Hidden Costs

A remodeling contractor can't see behind your walls when estimating, so below are a few hidden things that can drive costs up:

- Dry-rot/Termite damage
- Decaying pipes
- Availability of materials
- Poor insulation
- Trolls and /or viper pits in the walls

### What Our Service Pros Have to Say

We surveyed more than 900 Kitchen Remodeling Pros in our network about remodeling a 200 sq foot kitchen. The updates ranged from low-end to high-end materials. See graphs for the details.

	Low End Remodel	Mid-Range Remodel	High End Remodel
Appliances:	\$2,700	\$4,594	\$12,431
Cabinets :	\$5,504	\$8,634	\$17,587
Counters:	\$1,522	\$3,306	\$6,197
Fixtures/Sinks:	\$687	\$1,096	\$2,220
Flooring:	\$1,324	\$1,987	\$3,311
Lighting:	\$710	\$1,283	\$2,356
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$19,215</b>	<b>\$34,447</b>	<b>\$57,402</b>

\* The above kitchen remodel estimates are an average of responses provided by ServiceMagic contractors all over the country. The total figure represents an all inclusive cost for that type of remodel, and as such is not the sum of the broken out categories.

## UNDERSTANDING COSTS: Cost vs. Value

According to Hanley Wood's 2007 Cost vs. Value Report<sup>1</sup>, the average minor kitchen remodel cost, \$21,185, and a major remodel cost, \$55,503. However, those some kitchen remodels increased the resale value by \$17,576 for the minor remodel and \$43,363 for the major remodels. In these situations, you would actually only pay \$3,600 for a minor kitchen remodel and \$12,000 for a major remodel. That's some math that plays in your favor.

### Hanley Wood's Cost vs. Value Average

#### Mid-Range Minor Kitchen Remodel

- Update 200-square-foot kitchen with 30 linear feet of cabinetry and countertops
- Replace cabinet front with new raised-panel wood doors and drawers, including new hardware, but not the boxes
- Replace wall oven and cooktop with new energy-efficient models
- Replace laminate countertops; install mid-priced sink and faucet
- Repaint trim, add wall covering, and remove and replace resilient flooring

National Average Job Cost:	\$21,185
Resale Value:	\$17,576
<b>Cost Recouped on Closing:</b>	<b>83%</b>

#### Mid-Range Kitchen Remodel

- Update outmoded 200-square-foot kitchen with a functional layout of 30 linear feet of semi-custom wood cabinets, including a 3-by-5-foot island
- Replace laminate countertops
- Replace standard double-tub stainless-steel sink with standard single-lever faucet
- Replace energy-efficient wall oven, cooktop, ventilation system, built-in microwave, dishwasher, garbage disposal, and custom lighting
- Add new resilient flooring
- Finish with painted walls, trim, and ceiling

National Average Job Cost:	\$55,503
Resale Value:	\$43,363
<b>Cost Recouped on Closing:</b>	<b>78.1%</b>

#### Major Kitchen Remodel – Upscale

- Update outmoded 200-square-foot kitchen with 30 linear feet of top-of-the-line custom cherry cabinets with built-in sliding shelves and other interior accessories
- Replace laminate countertops with stone countertops and imported ceramic or glass tile backsplash
- Install built-in refrigerator, cooktop, and 36-inch commercial grade range and vent hood; built-in warming drawer, trash compactor, and built-in combination microwave and convection oven
- Install high-end undermount sink with designer faucets and add a built-in water filtration system
- Add new general and task lighting including low-voltage, under-cabinet lights
- Install cork flooring, cherry trim

National Average Job Cost:	\$109,394
Resale Value:	\$81,096
<b>Cost Recouped on Closing:</b>	<b>74.1%</b>

#### Where to Focus

We asked our network of contractors where the best place was to invest in a kitchen remodel. Here is the wisdom they had to share:

##### HIGH QUALITY CABINETS #1

##### APPLIANCES #2

##### COUNTERTOPS #3

##### LIGHTING #4

##### FLOORING #5

The above items are not sure fire winners, but they are good guides to get the money at closing.

\* Source: Recent poll of more than 650 ServiceMagic home professionals.

1. Visit [www.remodeling.hw.net/costvsvalue/index.html](http://www.remodeling.hw.net/costvsvalue/index.html) to learn more.

## PROJECT STAGES: Financing Your Project

### Money Matters: How to Finance Your Kitchen Remodel

There are several avenues that you can walk down to finance your remodel against your home's equity, and there are also routes to borrow against your earning potential. No matter what your situation, there is likely a financing option to fit your pistol.

#### • Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC)

This is a very popular method for financing remodels. HELOCs act like a credit card, so you are only financing what you spend instead of a set loan amount. Be careful with these because they typically have variable interest rates.

#### • Home Equity Loan

Similar to HELOCs, except that these loans are for a one-time set amount, the payments and interest rate are fixed, and the closing costs are higher. The good thing about these is neither your interest rate nor payments will increase.

#### • Homeowner Loan

Similar to the above methods except that you are borrowing against your income rather than the equity in your home. Your home will still be the collateral, but this is great for those new to homeownership with healthy incomes.

#### • Value Added Loans

If you are making a substantial improvement, you can sometimes borrow against what your home is going to be worth after the project, rather than its current value.



## DESIGN IDEAS: Style Guide

### Traditional

With a solid foundation of furniture-styled cabinets and vanities, the Traditional style is typically accented with ornate plumbing lines and fixtures and complemented by warm, yet subtle, colors and ornate molding.



### Contemporary

This style is marked by clean, sharp lines, minimalism, and an overall Eastern influence. A Contemporary kitchen will usually incorporate unique materials and sleek methods, such as concrete, brushed steel, and copper fixtures.



### Country

This style pulls from the old school and uses nature to construe the feeling of yesteryear. From rough hewn wood flooring to wainscoting, floral designs, and earthy colors, Country is simple and down-to-earth.



### Transitional

The Transitional style occupies the space between Traditional and Contemporary by softening the sometimes industrial Contemporary feel with rounded corners and warm colors while retaining the sophistication of Contemporary design.



### Tips from Kitchen Designers for developing your style:

- Look at the style and feel of other rooms in your home.
- Buy magazines and tear out what you like. Write down what you DON'T want.
- The style of the kitchen should fit the style and era the home was built/decorated.
- Picture yourself sitting in that spot— what colors and objects do you imagine?
- Keep it simple and tasteful, and don't cut corners with detailing.
- Don't go too far out of your comfort range.

## DESIGN IDEAS: Materials Guide

### Cabinets & Storage

These are the keys to efficient kitchen space, but they don't have to bore you to tears, nor leave you standing in the soup line. From custom to stock, you have options.

95% of kitchen cabinets will fall into the below categories. We have rank ordered them from the most expensive to least, as well as noted their individual durability.

#### • Custom

Custom cabinetry is built to your exact specifications, out of the material of your choice, and is made by a skilled craftsman. For these reasons, it is the most expensive of the cabinetry options.



- High-end
- Unique
- Hand-crafted



#### • Semi-Custom

These sit between custom and stock. You can't choose a style, cabinet design, material, or size that isn't in a supplier's catalog, but since suppliers typically offer an enormous selection in each area, the customer still gets a "custom" designed set of cabinets that has that one-of-a-kind feel.



- Great value
- Many options
- Durable



#### • Stock

These cabinets are pre-manufactured in the factory in set designs, materials, and sizes, and then sold by big box home improvement stores and other suppliers.



- Inexpensive
- Fewer options
- Quick delivery



## DESIGN IDEAS: Materials Guide (Continued)

### Counters

From granite and marble to laminate and solid surface, there are just as many options for kitchen counters that you can always find what you're looking for. Most counter-tops fall into the below categories. All of them are durable, though some more than others. The difference lies in the cost and style.

#### • Stone

Many prefer granite and marble stone slabs as an elegant countertop finish. Stone is sometimes sectioned down into smaller pieces for tile counters. Stone is nearly indestructible, easy to manage, and popular among homeowners.



- Most expensive
- Very popular
- Will last forever



#### • Concrete

This material is new to the scene. It is molded into the exact shape to fit your needs, and it can be stained if you don't like the gray look. Concrete is very heavy and sometimes needs additional fortification to support the weight.



- Fairly expensive
- Hottest trend
- Very versatile



#### • Solid Surface

Solid Surface is the industry name for high-grade plastic counters that can be molded into different shapes and connect to sinks seamlessly. This is a high-end product that requires little maintenance and repairs easily for any problems.



- Great value
- Many colors
- Repairs easily



#### • Laminate

This type is made of plastic and comes in a near infinite amount of colors and patterns. A great option for the budget conscious, and easy to fix if it gets damaged.



- Low cost
- Infinite options
- Fairly durable



#### • Tile

A tiled counter can add a great deal of color to a kitchen, but beware! The grout can stain easily and be tough to clean if you don't seal and maintain it properly. Beyond the maintenance, this is a fan favorite if you like a bright kitchen.



- Many patterns
- Infinite colors
- Repairs easily



## DESIGN IDEAS: Materials Guide (Continued)

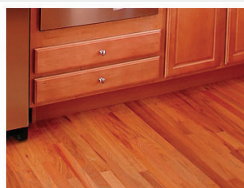
### Flooring

Flooring needs to stand up to water while keeping consistent with your style. Tile, laminate, and hardwood are the best options, but we won't talk you out of carpet.

Flooring types number very few, but there are endless options with these specific types. Most homes have several types of flooring, and it's best to know their pros and cons.

#### • Hardwood

This type of flooring needs no introduction. These days hardwood comes in a wider variety of wood species, plank sizes, and stains to match nearly every homeowners demand. Hardwood is a very elegant, sturdy flooring option.



- Elegant
- Durable
- Infinite colors



#### • Tile

Tile is a pretty straightforward choice for bathrooms and entries because tile stands up well to water and dirt. With scores of different sizes, materials, patterns, and colors, tile is a choice for many areas. Be careful, though, tile usually remains cool and might not be the best choice in colder climates. Nobody likes cold feet!

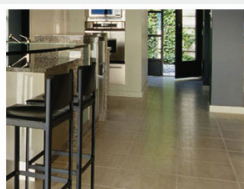


- Beautiful colors
- Water resistant
- Cool surface



#### • Laminate

Laminate is the newcomer and offers the elegance of hardwood without the scratches and dents. Laminate is cheaper, easier to install, and stands up very well to water.

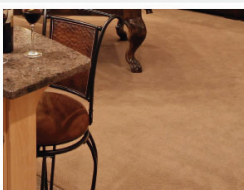


- Great value
- Many options
- Very durable



#### • Carpet

While carpet is a stock flooring choice, it is not many people's first choice for the kitchen. It can trap water, and if there are food spills from the kitchen, well it won't be pretty. Don't let us stop you if you truly want it; just be aware of the drawbacks.



- Many colors
- Low cost
- Reduces noise



## DESIGN IDEAS: Materials Guide (Continued)

### Tile

Kitchens use tile in many different ways: as flooring, countertop materials, and backsplash. But which do you choose? From unique styles of Saltillo and Spanish to the elegance of Travertine, there is the perfect tile for any kitchen.

Tile is a very durable material, but all materials are not created equal. Some are hard, some stain easily, and some only work as flooring. Here we have gathered the most popular ones.

#### • Travertine

Best described as a cross between marble and limestone, travertine has been popular for thousands of years, and was used to build the Roman Coliseum. Travertine ranges in color from an ivory shade to beige to reddish brown, and is a very classy tile.



- High end
- Elegant
- Uncommon



#### • Stone

From granite to marble, slate, and sandstone, stone tiles cover a lot of ground. Great for durability and appearance, stone can be pricey but worth it. You can buff it smooth for wall tile and leave it rough for flooring, whatever you wish.



- Expensive
- Very durable
- Popular



#### • Ceramic

They come in an almost endless variety of styles, they are easy to maintain, they are cost-effective compared to other tiles on the market, and they're just plain good looking. Whatever your tile need, there's a ceramic to match.



- Infinite colors
- Best value
- Great designs



#### • Saltillo

Saltillo is the most common of the Mexican and Spanish tiles. It is made from raw clay traditionally pressed by hand, and has an earthy, rough, almost terra cotta look to it. Great for creating a Southwestern feel.



- Very popular
- Good value
- Warm colors





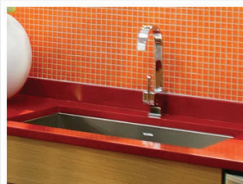
## DESIGN IDEAS: Materials Guide (Continued)

### Fixtures & Sinks

The amount of options for fixtures and sinks is paralyzing. From hands-free to low-flow to stainless steel, you have some thinking to do.

#### • Single Bowl Sinks

These sinks only have one basin to work in. Great for small families, but bad if you don't have a dishwasher, since you will lock up the sink as they're soaking.

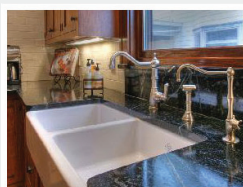


- Less convenient
- Smaller
- Great value



#### • Apron Front Sinks

Also called "farm sinks", these have an exposed solid front instead of hiding it below the counter. Functionally, not an advantage, the difference is the pure aesthetics that imbue this rustic feel.



- Great design
- Unique
- Varying costs



#### • Double Bowl Sinks

These are the typical kitchen sinks, where food and refuse goes down one side and the washing is done in the other. Great for the busy kitchen, the large family, or just the average homeowner.



- Most common
- Good value
- Efficient



#### • Bar Faucets

These faucets stand tall to be able to clean taller items like deep pots, blender bowls, and champagne flutes without turning into a pretzel.

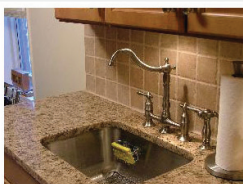


- Easy to use
- Good for tall items
- Good value



#### • Bridge Faucets

A bridge faucet keeps the hot/cold spigots close by attaching their plumbing above the counter. This is a very compact, elegant design.

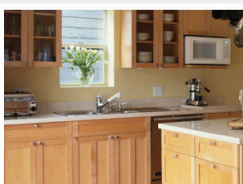


- Elegant design
- Compact
- Easy to use



#### • Pullout Faucets

This is the Swiss Army knife of faucets. They sit high but can be detached and used as a wand. Whatever you need to clean, this is a sure bet.



- Versatile
- Wide-reaching
- More expensive



#### • Widespread Faucets

The hot/cold spigots are spaced far away from the faucet, and the plumbing is sub-counter. A nice stylistic choice that helps create the illusion of space.



- Creates space
- Interesting design
- Great value





## DESIGN IDEAS: Materials Guide (Continued)

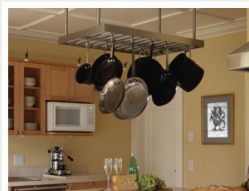
### Trends & Other Cool Stuff

Don't forget the extras!

Some kitchen materials deserve their own category, and we have gathered those things in this section so that you don't miss out on some of the coolest pieces to find their way into the gallery.

#### • Pot Racks

Whether you have a small kitchen or you just like the look, an overhead pot rack is great for out-of-the-way storage and easy access to your pots and pans.



- Great storage
- Many options
- Good design



#### • Water Filtration

Who wants nasty or hard water? A water filtration system will keep everything cleaner and healthier.



- Healthy
- Many options
- Varying costs



#### • Soap Dispensers

This smart addition makes certain that the soap doesn't wander off and provides convenient access for all potential hand washers.



- Convenient
- Easy access
- Great value



#### • Pot Fillers

These handy faucets are placed right above your stove or range so that you don't have to lug heavy pots of water from the sink to the burners. Chiropractors everywhere are losing business.



- Very convenient
- More expensive
- Adds safety



#### • Under Cabinet Lighting

Whether it be for task lighting or some added texture, this type of lighting is a great use of space and helps to light many kitchen tasks.



- Uses little space
- Great design
- Many uses



## DESIGN IDEAS: Going Green

### Calculating the True Value of Going Green

While cost is first in the mind of most homeowners, it's difficult to place a specific cost on green remodeling in the kitchen. The level of green each homeowner is willing to commit to varies, as does the scope of each individual kitchen remodel. What we can tell you is this:

- Green remodeling doesn't necessarily mean more expensive materials. Most green building materials are cost-competitive with traditional ones, and many actually cost less than non-green alternatives.
- Green building focuses on creating low-maintenance, long lasting kitchens, so you'll pay less for repairs and replacements over the life of your addition.
- Green remodeling is guaranteed to reduce energy costs in the kitchen, now and in the long term. Those energy savings will help to offset any higher initial costs over time.
- The true value of a green kitchen isn't always best measured in dollars and cents.

This last point is an important one. It's what green remodeling expert David Johnston refers to as "avoiding the payback trap." Green remodeling doesn't just mean adopting an energy-efficient design that will pay for itself over time. It also places an emphasis on creating healthier indoor living areas, utilizes long lasting, high-quality, low-maintenance building materials and practices, and going green is committed at every turn to environmental responsibility.

While it's hard to assign a specific dollar amount to such things, few homeowners can deny the high value of healthier families, time saved by eliminating regular maintenance chores and repairs, and the peace of mind that comes with knowing that you've done everything you can to pass a better world onto your children and grandchildren. That said, it's easy to see what Johnston's getting at when he says that the true value of green remodeling extends far beyond the bottom line.

### Green Tips for Increasing Energy Efficiency in the Kitchen

A green kitchen remodel strives to increase energy efficiency at every turn, from taking advantage of passive solar heating, to installing energy-efficient appliances, to identifying all possible sources of energy loss in a remodeling project. With energy costs on the rise and only looking to get higher as the months and years roll by, green remodeling translates into big energy savings as long as you own your home.

- **Purchase energy-efficient appliances.** Replacing your old appliances with ENERGY STAR-rated models can reduce the cost of running your appliances by more than 30 percent. A new refrigerator alone can save enough energy to light your home for three months, and a new dishwasher will save you up to \$30 per year on your energy bills.
- **Insulate hot water pipes.** Doing so prevents heat loss as hot water runs from your hot water heater to your faucet, reducing the demands placed on your hot water heater.
- **Install low-flow water faucets to reduce water usage.** They can reduce water usage at these faucets by 60 percent.

- **Install an "on-demand" hot water circulation pump.** These pumps send hot water to fixtures throughout your home in seconds, so you won't waste water resources waiting for the hot water to arrive. They also allow your hot water heater to operate more efficiently, reducing energy costs.
- **Install low-e, multiple paned windows with wood or vinyl frames.** They are one of the single most beneficial ways to increase the energy efficiency in the kitchen. Installing them throughout your home can reduce heating and cooling costs by as much as 30 to 50 percent.
- **Install window awnings and plant deciduous trees outside East and West facing windows.** Both create shade and prevent solar heat gain during summer months, so you can run your A/C less.
- **Orient windows with sunlight and natural breezes in mind.** It's the best way to take advantage of passive solar heating from sunlight in the winter, and to make the most of cool, natural breezes during the summer months.
- **Use compact fluorescent light bulbs.** They use 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs, and last 10 times as long.
- **Install large windows, skylights, solar tubes, light shelves, and clerestory windows.** All make the most of natural lighting during the day, reducing the need for artificial lighting in your kitchen.
- **Install radiant floor heating.** Radiant floor heating increases energy efficiency, creates more comfortable and consistent heat, eliminates airborne particulates associated with forced air heating, and can provide heat for a basement area below, as well as the kitchen above.
- **Install task lighting.** Task specific lighting over cooking, food prep, and dining areas allows you to light up smaller spaces as needed, instead of the entire kitchen. Wiring task lighting separate switches will help you conserve energy even further.

### Green Remodeling Tips for a Healthier Kitchen

Volatile organic compounds, formaldehyde, vinyl chloride fumes, and toxic mold might read like the beginning of a toxicology report, but it's actually a list of chemicals, additives, and byproducts commonly associated with traditional building materials used in kitchen remodels. Green building seeks to reduce the presence of these toxic chemicals and byproducts as much as possible, making your new kitchen healthier for everyone that resides under your roof.

- **Install high-efficiency ovens and stoves.** Purchasing a stove with high combustion efficiency will help reduce the level of harmful exhaust and unburned gases that are leaked into your home when cooking.
- **Avoid particleboard and medium density fiberboard (MDF).** These products, commonly used in countertops and cabinets, off-gas urea formaldehyde, a known carcinogen. If you do use MDF or particle board in your kitchen, be sure to seal exposed areas with several coats of a low- or no -VOC paint or sealer.
- **Purchase custom cabinetry.** Custom cabinetry isn't cheap, but solid wood cabinets eliminate the health risks associated with cheaper cabinets made of MDF or particleboard.

## DESIGN IDEAS: Going Green (Continued)

- **Purchase solid slab countertops.** Solid stone, concrete, and engineered stone countertops release almost no airborne toxins into your kitchen. They're also virtually maintenance free, and easier to keep clean than most other materials (a big plus when you consider that hard-to-clean countertops are a prime breeding ground for harmful, food related bacteria).
- **Install a whole house water filtration system, or local filters on water faucets.** Be sure to check into your local water quality ratings first, however, as that will determine which type of filter will be most beneficial to you.
- **Good ventilation is one of the most important aspects of a green kitchen.** Not only does adequate ventilation remove cooking odors and harmful combustion gases, but it also whisks

away moisture created by cooking, which is a primary source of mold problems in kitchen areas.

- **Install windows in your kitchen.** The most energy-efficient ventilation system is an open window in good weather.
- **Install a range hood vented to the outdoors.** During cooler months, the best way to ventilate your kitchen is by installing a range hood. Be sure that it vents to the outdoors, and look for a fan with a sone level of 4.5 or below to ensure quiet operation.
- **Avoid vinyl flooring.** It has a short lifespan, traps moisture (which can lead to delamination, mold growth, and rot), and emits vinyl chloride fumes, a proven carcinogen.

### GREEN KITCHEN CHECKLIST

#### Job Site and Landscaping

- ☐ Remodel for efficient use of space
- ☐ Reuse construction and deconstruction waste
- ☐ Recycle job-site waste

#### Structural Framing

- ☐ Use advanced framing techniques (AFT)

#### Plumbing

- ☐ Insulate pipes
- ☐ Install on-demand hot water circulation pump
- ☐ Investigate your water supply
- ☐ Install a whole house water filtration system
- ☐ Install activated carbon filters
- ☐ Install water distillers
- ☐ Install a reverse osmosis system

#### Electrical

- ☐ Install light pipes
- ☐ Install compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs
- ☐ Install halogen lighting
- ☐ Install lighting controls
- ☐ Install sealed or airtight IC recessed lighting

#### Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- ☐ Use duct mastic instead of duct tape
- ☐ Install ductwork windows for natural ventilation
- ☐ Install a bathroom exhaust fan
- ☐ Install a heat recovery ventilator (HRC)

#### Solar Energy

- ☐ Install double-paned windows
- ☐ Install low-e (low-emissivity) windows

- ☐ Install low-conductivity frames
- ☐ Install window coverings and overhangs
- ☐ Use landscaping to shade windows

#### Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- ☐ Install zoned, hydronic, radiant heating
- ☐ Use duct mastic instead of duct tape
- ☐ Install operable windows for natural ventilation
- ☐ Vent kitchen range hood to the outside

#### Appliances

- ☐ Replace your standard dishwasher with a low water-use model
- ☐ Look for ENERGY STAR label on gas appliances
- ☐ Buy best available technology refrigerator

#### Interior Materials/Finished

- ☐ Use formaldehyde-free materials
- ☐ Seal all exposed particleboard or MDF
- ☐ Use FSC-certified wood flooring
- ☐ Use rapidly renewable flooring materials
- ☐ Use recycled-content tile
- ☐ Replace vinyl flooring with natural linoleum
- ☐ Use exposed concrete as finish floor
- ☐ Calculate paint need beforehand
- ☐ Use low-or-no-VOC and formaldehyde-free paint
- ☐ Use low-VOC, water-based wood finished
- ☐ Deal properly with finish leftovers
- ☐ Use solvent-free adhesives

\* Green Checklist provided by "Green Remodeling: Changing the World One Room at a Time" by David Johnston

## USER ADVICE

Below are just a few pieces of advice from homeowners, contractors, and designers on how to deal with a Kitchen remodel. For more user advice comments, go to the user advice tab on your project guide.

### Homeowner Kitchen Advice

Break the work into small pieces that have a beginning and a defined end. Write up a detailed contract with clauses that define specific milestones and define the process for ending the contract and changing the scope of work. Prepare a specific communication plan with regular updates to discuss work that was completed and plan upcoming work. Make sure the contractor can meet you at times that are convenient (not at 6:15 am on a weekday morning when you are trying to get kids ready for school). Base the payment schedule on work completed. Set guidelines on when the contractor can come to the house.

- A L. Garrett Park, MD

*Listen to your gut! Get at least 3 bids per project. And never hire someone solely because you like their personality! Check all references and go to see work they have done in the past...Recent past! Never make a decision based solely on time either...Taking time to do it RIGHT is better than getting a bad job done quickly. Pay up for better service*

- A G. Phoenix, AZ

### Contractor Kitchen Advice

*Don't get started until you know what you want and have picked everything out. Try not to make changes during the construction process; it will cost twice as much as simply taking more time to decide on everything before construction begins. If possible, try to do the remodel before you move into a new house or understand that your kitchen will be out of use for two to four weeks. Don't rush perfection. The workers need time to do a quality installation. Relax. It always looks worse before it gets done. Have fun, smile, and be nice.*

- James Hanson Chandler, AZ

Select a contractor who will explain the actual costs of tile, sink, faucet, lighting, cabinetry, and actual construction. Be mindful that shortcuts often don't pay in the end, whether it's for a flip or for your long-term use. Take your time choosing your materials, and don't be afraid to ask your builder for opinions.

- Sean Beckerman Oceanside, NY

### Designer Kitchen Advice

*Be realistic about cost of remodeling, time it takes, and mess created in your home. Try to have most cabinets made before tearing out existing to have a functioning kitchen as long as possible. Learn to Barbecue and use bathroom or garage sinks while in construction. Also, be nice to your designer and crew.*

- Leslie Harris Los Angeles, CA

*Buy kitchen design magazines and start to get an idea of what you like and do not like. Set an estimated budget for the work and arrange for the funding before you start to design. Then hire a good kitchen designer who will guide you through the process (and in the long run save you money and make for a much more efficiently implemented project).*

- Carole Jackson Oak Park, IL

## Appendix A

### Contractor Comparison Worksheet

Use this Contractor Comparison form for a side-by-side comparison of every professional you are interviewing for your bathroom project.

**Company #1:**

**Contact Name:**

**Phone Number:**

**Notes:**

**Company #2:**

**Contact Name:**

**Phone Number:**

**Notes:**

**Company #3:**

**Contact Name:**

**Phone Number:**

**Notes:**

**Company #4:**

**Contact Name:**

**Phone Number:**

**Notes:**

---

Use this checklist as a way to properly interview Home Pros about their business and methods. Include references here as well.

#### Questions you should always ask your contractor:

- Are you licensed for this particular work? Can I have a copy of the license for my records?
- Will you provide me with a copy of your Insurance Statement?
- References: Name and Number

#### Optional Questions to ask your Contractor

- How long have you been a kitchen contractor?
- Were you formally trained or how did you acquire your experience?
- Do you belong to any professional organizations?
- Do you give written warranties?
- Will this project require a permit?
- Can you estimate how long this will take?
- How many other projects do you have right now?
- Will you provide options for different materials?

#### Questions for references

- Were you happy with the project?
- Was the job completed on time?
- Were there any unexpected expenses?
- Would you recommend this kitchen contractor?
- Do you have any advice for me if I decide to use this contractor?

## Appendix B

### 10 Steps for Hiring Service Professionals

#### 1. Confirm the sales person works for the company.

- Verify that the individual with whom you are speaking is an authorized agent of the company that was referred by ServiceMagic.

#### 2. Ask for a copy of the company's license.

- It is important that you verify the license is still in good standing. Also keep in mind that certain states or provinces do not require licensing if the job is under a certain dollar amount. Remember that you can find a list of your state's licensing requirements on the ServiceMagic website.

**We recommend before working with a service professional, that you verify information presented is still current and/or acceptable to you. While ServiceMagic may be notified of changes in member service professional insurance coverage which are then confirmed with insurance agents or companies, we cannot guarantee that insurance information is still valid at time of presentation. We recommend that you obtain a copy of the service professional's insurance certificate where applicable.**

#### 3. Ask for proof of insurance.

- Ask the company to provide a copy of their insurance certificate. We recommend that you verify with the insurance agency or carrier that the policy is still in good standing.
- General Liability insurance typically covers a contractor for accidents that occur while the contractor is working. However, there are exclusions to coverage, and you should confirm the actual scope of the contractors coverage directly with the contractor.

#### 4. Finalize the contract before starting on a project.

A good contract...

- Should be written on company letterhead
- Should contain the company's name, address, phone numbers, and license number (if applicable)
- Should contain the consumer's name, address (where work is to be performed), and phone numbers
- Is dated when it is written
- Includes a detailed description of the work that is going to be performed
- Provides dollar amounts associated with each task included in the project
- Includes an anticipated/estimated start and finish date
- Provides a payment schedule
- Includes a termination clause
- Contains a clause that protects the homeowner from any potential mechanics liens once you have paid the contractor in full
- Clearly states whether permits will be pulled, and who will be responsible for pulling them.

#### 5. Make payments to the company that was referred.

- Do not pay an individual.

#### 6. Avoid paying with cash.

- Check and credit cards are preferable, and be sure to get a receipt for all payments.

#### 7. Withhold final payment until you are satisfied with the project.

- Don't pay in full until the project is completely finished and you have completed your final inspection.
- If sub-contractors were used, be sure to get signed releases from all subcontractors clearly indicating that they have been paid in full by the general contractor.
- For larger projects, don't make the final payment until you have passed the final building inspection.

#### 8. Don't advance money for materials.

- If absolutely necessary, make sure the materials are delivered to your house with a receipt showing that they have been paid in full.

#### 9. Check multiple references.

- In addition to reading the company's ServiceMagic Ratings & Reviews, consider checking additional references for the service professional.

#### 10. Document all changes to the contract.

- Make sure all changes to the original contract, no matter how small, are documented and signed off by both parties.

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## Appendix C

### Contracts with Contractors: The Big Issues

A contract is a legally binding document that details the expectations and responsibilities of all parties involved in a home improvement project. It clarifies the goals of both homeowner and contractor, and it protects each party's rights regarding the project.

#### The Big Stuff

This article addresses the broad strokes of developing a contract between you and your contractor. The finer points are addressed in another article, but keep in mind that this is simply a guide - contracts vary significantly from project to project.

#### Contact Information

It seems obvious, but make sure that you include in the contract the contractor's name, physical address, phone number, insurance company, and account and license numbers. If there is a dispute, you need to know where the company is located (you can't serve a subpoena if you don't have a physical address - a post office box number won't do!), the company owner, the name of the insurance and bonding carriers and the way by which you can reach all involved parties.

#### Scope of Work

Require a complete description of the work to be done. This includes the overall scope of the work as well as individual aspects of the project: electrical, plumbing, finish carpentry, masonry, etc. The type and quality of all materials should be spelled out. Make allowances for fixtures, floor coverings, etc. that are sufficient to provide the level of quality you require.

In addition, indicate all large equipment that will remain on-site for extended periods, such as scaffolding or cement mixers. If you have architectural plans, include them in this section as well.

If you decide to change the scope of the work during the job by either adding or subtracting items, you should make sure there is a written change order, with project cost and timing changes signed off on by both the contractor and homeowner.

#### Project Schedule

Define the project's start date, and secure from your contractor the approximate length of time it will take to complete. Ask what potential conflicts might arise due to other projects with which your contractor is concurrently involved. You will find that most contractors are reluctant to sign a contract that includes late penalty clauses, but it still may be an item that you care to pursue. Finally, specify the time that workers will arrive and depart each day, and mention the days, if any, that they are not to work.

#### Schedule of Payments

There are no hard and fast rules as to how a contractor collects his or her fees. Some don't collect until the work is completed, while others ask for 50% up front. The average is three payments; the first when the bulk of materials are delivered or when a foundation is poured; a second payment when the job is half complete; and 20% when the job is essentially complete.

Certainly you don't want to pay and then have them absent for extended periods, but you also don't want to withhold and have the same result. Remember that this is a symbiotic relationship. It is understandable to want to be paid and likewise understandable to want your work done well and quickly. Try to be as accommodating as your budget will allow. Your contractor has probably dealt with a variety of different payment structures; perhaps what you have in mind is just fine with him. If you don't have one in mind, there are two customary ways of paying for a large job listed below:

**A) Cost plus flat fee:** usually there will be draws set up with the homeowner. The contractor uses the draw to pay actual vs. estimated costs, and submits all receipts and accounting on a regular basis. Flat fees average 13% to 20% and are usually paid, along with the draws, as the job progresses. This method allows great flexibility to make changes as the job proceeds, but it is more difficult to estimate the final cost.

**B) Bid basis:** Your contractor estimates the job, and provides a contract with all materials and fees included. You and your contractor agree on a payment schedule, referencing stages of completion in the work.

In both cases above, it is your responsibility to be certain that each stage is completed before cutting a check. If you're not familiar enough with electrical or plumbing work, for example, to know if the proper stage has been completed to make the payment, ask a knowledgeable outside source.

**Note:** If financing is necessary, be certain that a clause is added stating that the contract is void unless and until financing is obtained.

#### Building Plans & Permits

Be sure the contractor states in writing that he/she will submit any building plans needed to the city code compliance department, obtain all necessary permits and arrange for all inspections required.

\*If the work does not pass inspection, the contractor must bear the cost of corrections.

#### Licensing & Insurance

Do your homework on your contractor's licensing and insurance. Contractor licensing requirements vary by state. Research these regulations prior to beginning your project, and require that your contractor provide proof of current licensing if relevant.

Mandate in your contract that the contractor provide proof of all required insurance. This should include, but may not be limited to, general liability and worker's compensation for his or her employees.

## Appendix D

### Arranging Payment for Home Improvement Work

Homeowners always have questions in regards to how much to pay a contractor when home improvement work first begins. What is an appropriate down payment? Should money be paid during construction, but before the work is complete? And when is the final payment due?

In paying for home improvement projects, every consumer has heard stories about contractors receiving cash payments and not coming back.

This article will address the homeowner “payment dilemma” posed above. To respond to questions about how and when to safely make payments to contractors, we first need to distinguish between projects of different sizes and complexity. For the purpose of simplicity, we will address the way to approach the payment for home improvement projects into the following 3 areas:

- Small Maintenance or Repair Projects
- Custom Projects
- Larger Renovation Projects

#### Small Maintenance or Repair Projects

A plumbing or electrical repair is an example of a small maintenance or repair project. Fixing a door, window, or mending a fence are additional examples. These types of projects usually take less than a day to complete, and are billed as either an hourly charge, or fixed fee to the homeowner. With small projects such as these, payments are usually made upon successful completion of the project. Upon successful completion of the work, the contractor is paid in full. With small jobs like these, down payments are not necessary because the contractor has the ability to “finance” the work and pay for the materials until payment is received. As projects start to grow in scope and complexity, however, most contractors don’t have the flexibility to provide this kind of project financing.

#### Custom Projects

Custom projects provide a homeowner with specialized work where products and services are tailored for unique applications. Custom kitchens and baths, countertops, built-in cabinetry and shelving, and even custom painting projects fall under this category. With this kind of custom work, materials are being purchased that are created specifically for these projects. With this kind of work, some kind of down payment is usually required to order the custom materials. For example, a custom kitchen or bath cabinet order requires a 30% to 50% down payment to get the cabinets built. The cabinet manufacturer knows that if the homeowner were to change his mind after making the order, that the manufacturer could be “stuck” with this custom cabinetry that was created for their specific application. Due to this custom application, the manufacturer protects their investment of time and materials by asking for up to half of the payment to produce the cabinets, and may require the remaining half upon delivery of the cabinetry to the jobsite.

With custom work such as this, the homeowner and contractor create a payment plan, or draw schedule that provides the contractor with the money they need to order these custom materials. It’s not up to the contractor to finance large material purchases such as this. This is the consumer’s responsibility.

With custom work such as this, the homeowner and contractor need to work out a payment plan that provides the contractor with the required deposits to order materials, and additional payments are made as the custom installations are completed. Payments should not exceed the work that has been completed. Work with your contractor to arrive at a payment plan that pays for all custom materials upon order, but pays the balance of the contract upon completion of the custom work.

#### Large Renovation Projects

Any large project should contain a detailed draw schedule. The homeowner pays these draws or “progress payments” when certain parts or phases of the project are completed. A draw schedule for a \$100,000 second-story addition might look like this:

##### Payments to be made as follows:

1st DRAW	10% DEPOSIT	\$10,000	10%
2nd DRAW	Second Floor Deck Installed	\$15,000	15%
3rd DRAW	Windows Installed	\$15,000	15%
4th DRAW	Close-In and Inspection	\$10,000	10%
5th DRAW	Drywall Taped	\$10,000	10%
6th DRAW	Prime Paint	\$10,000	10%
7th DRAW	Plumbing Fixtures Set	\$10,000	10%
8th DRAW	Hardwood Finished	\$10,000	10%
9th DRAW	Final Inspection	\$5,000	5%
10th DRAW	Punch List Complete and Final Release of all liens	\$5,000	5%
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

On large renovation projects, make sure you and the contractor are clear about when the final payment is due. Define in writing when the last draw is due. In many large projects, there is always some outstanding work to be completed, as you may still be waiting for a custom faucet or light fixture. It’s not fair to withhold the entire final draw if some part or material is on back-order, and the contractor can’t control delivery and completion. In cases such as this, agree with the contractor to withhold the cost of the labor and materials for the outstanding work, but if the rest of the project is complete, pay the balance of the final draw. This type of cooperation and agreement allows you and your contractor to work together to complete your project to the satisfaction of everyone involved.

## Appendix E

### Sample Change Order Form

Get matched to 10-point screened pros at [www.servicemagic.com](http://www.servicemagic.com)

Job Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Change Order #: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Owners:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Owners hereby authorize the following changes in the plans and specifications of the above described construction project, and/or order the additional materials, supplies, services, labor and other items listed below and /or requires to complete this Change Order to all other terms and conditions in the contract with

\_\_\_\_\_

Change Order Amount \$: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment for this Change Order is due upon completion of the change order work. All provisions of contracts between the above parties pertaining to the above job are applicable to this agreement. This change order may extend the time required to complete this project. Please see paragraph "Extra Time" in your contract.

Owner (your business name here): \_\_\_\_\_

Accepted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Page: \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

#### Disclaimer

*This form is provided for informational purposes only, and does not constitute legal advice. You should have a licensed attorney review any legal documents to ensure that they are adequate for your needs and are valid and in conformity with any applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations.*

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## Appendix F

### Sample Punch List Form

Get matched to 10-point screened pros at [www.servicemagic.com](http://www.servicemagic.com)

A punch list is a record of all items withing a project that a contractor must correct or complete to the satisfaction of the homeowner before the job is considered finalized.

Prior to the project closeout and final payments, homeowner and contractor or architect should jointly conduct a project walk-through to observe all items that need correcting or completing.

All parties understand that when the homeowner agrees that the punch list details itemized below have been completed to his or her satisfaction, the project is entirely complete and all outstanding payments are due to the contractor and /or architects.

Punch list items	Date	Approved

Completed list items submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

All punch list items are complete: \_\_\_\_\_

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