



FAMILY HOME IMPROVEMENTS

The Ultimate Kitchen Remodel Buyer's Guide

A Homeowner's Guide to Planning, Budgeting, Cabinets, Counters, Permits, Construction, and Final Walkthrough



Family Home Improvements
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KITCHEN REMODELING

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Welcome

A kitchen remodel is one of the biggest decisions a homeowner can make. It affects the way your family cooks, gathers, stores everyday items, entertains guests, and uses the heart of the home. This guide was created by Family Home Improvements to help homeowners ask better questions, compare estimates correctly, and avoid expensive kitchen remodeling mistakes.

The Family Home Improvements kitchen remodeling page explains that a kitchen should improve functionality by adding storage space, increasing counter space, updating appliances, and creating a space the whole family loves. This buyer's guide expands that idea into a practical checklist you can use before, during, and after your kitchen remodel.

Use this guide when you are planning your layout, meeting contractors, comparing bids, reviewing materials, checking the contract, and walking the finished project.

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1. Kitchen Remodel Readiness Checklist

Start here. If several of these items apply to your home, it may be time to schedule a professional kitchen remodeling consultation.

- ☐ My kitchen feels outdated or does not match the rest of the home.
- ☐ I do not have enough cabinet storage.
- ☐ I do not have enough countertop space.
- ☐ The layout makes cooking, cleaning, or entertaining difficult.
- ☐ The cabinets are damaged, worn, poorly built, or no longer functional.
- ☐ The countertops are cracked, stained, uneven, or outdated.
- ☐ The flooring is damaged, loose, or hard to clean.
- ☐ The lighting is too dark or in the wrong areas.
- ☐ The plumbing fixtures are old, leaking, or inefficient.
- ☐ The electrical outlets are not in convenient locations.
- ☐ The appliances are old and may be using extra energy.
- ☐ I want to open the space or improve flow into the dining or living area.
- ☐ I want a kitchen that increases home value and everyday comfort.

Important reminder: a kitchen remodel should solve real problems, not just replace old finishes. Start with how the kitchen needs to work, then choose the look.



2. Project Goals and Budget Worksheet

Before you meet with a contractor, write down what matters most. Clear goals help prevent confusion, change orders, and disappointment.

Top Goals

- ☐ More storage
- ☐ More counter space
- ☐ Better lighting
- ☐ New cabinets
- ☐ New countertops
- ☐ Better layout
- ☐ Open concept feel
- ☐ Updated appliances
- ☐ Better flooring
- ☐ Larger sink
- ☐ More outlets
- ☐ Better pantry storage
- ☐ Improved resale value
- ☐ Modern design

Planning Item	Your Notes
Main reason for remodeling	
Must-have items	
Nice-to-have items	
Preferred style/colors	
Budget range	
Preferred start date	
Biggest concern	



3. Layout and Design Planning

The layout is where the kitchen remodel becomes either easy to live with or frustrating. Before choosing cabinets and counters, think through how people move through the kitchen and how each work zone will be used.

- Cooking zone: stove, oven, microwave, spices, pots, pans, and utensils.
- Cleaning zone: sink, dishwasher, trash, towels, soap, and cleaning supplies.
- Prep zone: open counter space, cutting boards, small appliances, and storage.
- Storage zone: pantry, cabinets, drawers, pullouts, and appliance garages.
- Serving zone: island, peninsula, dining area, or coffee bar.

Layout Questions

- ☐ Will the existing layout stay the same?
- ☐ Will walls be removed or opened?
- ☐ Will plumbing move?
- ☐ Will electrical circuits need to be added?
- ☐ Is there enough walkway clearance?
- ☐ Is the refrigerator in a practical location?
- ☐ Will cabinet doors and appliance doors open properly?
- ☐ Is there room for trash and recycling?
- ☐ Will the kitchen have enough natural light?
- ☐ Will a bifold or accordion door improve indoor-outdoor living?



4. Cabinets Checklist

Cabinets control the look, storage, and daily function of the kitchen. A low-quality cabinet can make a new kitchen feel cheap, while a well-planned cabinet layout can make even a smaller kitchen work better.

- ☐ Cabinet style is clearly selected.
- ☐ Cabinet color or finish is clearly selected.
- ☐ Door style is confirmed.
- ☐ Drawer box construction is explained.
- ☐ Hinges and drawer glides are included.
- ☐ Soft-close doors and drawers are included or priced separately.
- ☐ Pullout shelves are included where needed.
- ☐ Pantry cabinet design is confirmed.
- ☐ Filler pieces and trim are included.
- ☐ Crown molding or light rail is included if desired.
- ☐ Cabinet hardware is selected.
- ☐ Delivery and installation are included in the estimate.

Ask the contractor whether cabinets are custom, semi-custom, prefabricated, or stock cabinets. Make sure the estimate clearly states what is included.



5. Countertops, Backsplash, and Flooring

Counters, backsplash, and flooring need to work together. They also need to stand up to daily use, cleaning, water, heat, and foot traffic.

Countertop Questions

- ☐ Material is selected: quartz, granite, solid surface, butcher block, or other.
- ☐ Color/pattern is confirmed.
- ☐ Edge profile is confirmed.
- ☐ Sink cutout is included.
- ☐ Cooktop cutout is included if needed.
- ☐ Slab seams are discussed.
- ☐ Backsplash height is confirmed.
- ☐ Removal and disposal of old counters is included.

Backsplash and Flooring Questions

- ☐ Tile, grout, and pattern are selected.
- ☐ Backsplash outlets and covers are planned.
- ☐ Flooring material is selected.
- ☐ Floor transitions are included.
- ☐ Subfloor issues are addressed.
- ☐ Water-resistant flooring is considered.
- ☐ Baseboards or toe kicks are included.



6. Plumbing, Electrical, Lighting, and Appliances

Kitchen remodeling often involves more than cabinets and countertops. Plumbing, electrical, lighting, and appliance planning can affect the schedule, cost, and inspection requirements.

Plumbing Checklist

- ☐ Sink location is confirmed.
- ☐ Faucet is selected.
- ☐ Garbage disposal is included if desired.
- ☐ Dishwasher connection is included.
- ☐ Water line for refrigerator is included if needed.
- ☐ Any plumbing relocation is clearly priced.

Electrical and Lighting Checklist

- ☐ Outlet locations are planned.
- ☐ Dedicated appliance circuits are discussed.
- ☐ Lighting layout is confirmed.
- ☐ Recessed lights are included if desired.
- ☐ Pendant lights are included if desired.
- ☐ Under-cabinet lighting is included or excluded clearly.
- ☐ Switch locations are confirmed.
- ☐ GFCI requirements are discussed.



7. Permits, Engineering, and Construction

Family Home Improvements lists design, permits, construction and engineering, cabinets, counters, appliances, plumbing and electrical, and flooring as kitchen remodeling services. These categories matter because a kitchen project can involve many trades working in the right order.

Ask early whether the project needs permits. In many cases, moving plumbing, adding electrical, changing structural walls, or making major layout changes may require city review or inspection.

- ☐ Permit responsibility is clear.
- ☐ Structural changes are identified.
- ☐ Engineering is included if needed.
- ☐ Inspection schedule is understood.
- ☐ Demo work is clearly described.
- ☐ Dust protection is included.
- ☐ Construction timeline is explained.
- ☐ Cleanup and debris removal are included.
- ☐ Change order process is written down.



8. Estimate Comparison Worksheet

Do not compare kitchen estimates by price alone. One estimate may include cabinets, counters, electrical, plumbing, flooring, backsplash, permits, demolition, and cleanup, while another estimate may leave important items out.

Item	Company 1	Company 2	Company 3
Company name			
License provided			
Design included			
Permits included			
Demo included			
Cabinets included			
Counters included			
Backsplash included			
Flooring included			
Plumbing included			
Electrical included			
Lighting included			
Appliances included			
Painting included			
Cleanup included			
Warranty included			
Estimated timeline			
Total price			



9. 50 Kitchen Remodel Questions to Ask

Use these questions when talking to a contractor. The four Family Home Improvements podcast videos you shared are titled as a 50 kitchen remodeling questions series, so this section is built around the same buyer-education idea.

1. Are you licensed and insured?
2. How long have you been remodeling kitchens?
3. Who will manage my project?
4. Who will be in my home each day?
5. What is included in the estimate?
6. What is not included?
7. Is design included?
8. Are permits included?
9. Will engineering be needed?
10. Will walls be removed?
11. Will plumbing move?
12. Will electrical circuits be added?
13. Will the panel need upgrades?
14. What cabinets are included?
15. Are soft-close doors and drawers included?
16. Are cabinet fillers and trim included?
17. What countertop material is included?
18. Are countertop seams discussed?
19. Is backsplash included?
20. Is flooring included?
21. Are appliances included or supplied by homeowner?
22. Who installs appliances?
23. Is under-cabinet lighting included?
24. How will dust be controlled?
25. How long will demolition take?
26. How long will the kitchen be unusable?
27. Will I need to move out?



28. Can I keep my refrigerator running?
29. How are hidden problems handled?
30. What if dry rot or bad framing is found?
31. How are change orders approved?
32. What payment schedule is required?
33. What warranties apply?
34. Who handles inspections?
35. Will cleanup be daily?
36. Who hauls away trash?
37. Will floors be protected?
38. Will cabinets be level and plumb?
39. Will walls be patched and painted?
40. What happens if products are delayed?
41. Can I choose colors and finishes?
42. Can I use my own materials?
43. When do I need to make selections?
44. What is the project timeline?
45. How often will I receive updates?
46. Who do I call with questions?
47. Can you provide references or reviews?
48. Do you have photos of similar kitchens?
49. What is the final walkthrough process?
50. When is final payment due?



10. Red Flags to Watch For

A kitchen remodel has too many moving parts to rely on vague promises. Be careful if you see any of these warning signs.

- ☐ The estimate is vague or only gives one total price.
- ☐ The contractor will not put details in writing.
- ☐ The cabinet brand or cabinet type is not identified.
- ☐ The countertop material is not identified.
- ☐ Plumbing and electrical work are not explained.
- ☐ Permit responsibility is unclear.
- ☐ The contractor pressures you to sign immediately.
- ☐ The payment schedule feels excessive or unclear.
- ☐ There is no clear change order process.
- ☐ No timeline is provided.
- ☐ No warranty is explained.
- ☐ The contractor avoids questions about inspections or hidden damage.



11. Contractor Qualification Checklist

Choose a contractor who can explain the process, communicate clearly, and manage the trades in the right order.

- ☐ Licensed contractor information is provided.
- ☐ Insurance information is available.
- ☐ Written estimate is provided.
- ☐ Scope of work is detailed.
- ☐ Payment schedule is clear.
- ☐ Timeline is realistic.
- ☐ Selections process is explained.
- ☐ Project manager or contact person is assigned.
- ☐ Reviews or references are available.
- ☐ Warranty and service process are explained.
- ☐ The contractor listens to your goals and does not only push price.



12. Installation Preparation Checklist

A little preparation before construction starts can reduce stress and delays.

- ☐ Empty cabinets and drawers.
- ☐ Create a temporary kitchen area.
- ☐ Move small appliances.
- ☐ Protect valuables and fragile items.
- ☐ Plan meals during construction.
- ☐ Confirm where crew can park.
- ☐ Confirm restroom access if needed.
- ☐ Secure pets.
- ☐ Confirm work hours.
- ☐ Confirm material delivery dates.
- ☐ Confirm dust protection plan.
- ☐ Confirm who has access to the home.



13. Final Walkthrough Checklist

Before final payment, walk the project carefully with the contractor.

- ☐ Cabinets are level and doors align.
- ☐ Drawers open and close smoothly.
- ☐ Cabinet hardware is installed.
- ☐ Countertops are clean and properly installed.
- ☐ Sink and faucet work properly.
- ☐ Garbage disposal works if included.
- ☐ Dishwasher runs and drains.
- ☐ Outlets and switches work.
- ☐ Lights work.
- ☐ GFCI outlets test correctly.
- ☐ Backsplash grout and caulking look clean.
- ☐ Flooring is complete and transitions are secure.
- ☐ Paint touchups are complete.
- ☐ Trash and debris are removed.
- ☐ Warranty information is provided.
- ☐ You know who to call for service.



14. Maintenance and Care

After the remodel, protect your investment with simple care habits.

- Wipe up water around sink, dishwasher, and refrigerator water lines quickly.
- Use cutting boards instead of cutting directly on countertops.
- Use cleaners recommended for your countertop material.
- Avoid slamming cabinet doors and drawers even if they are soft-close.
- Clean grout and caulking regularly.
- Inspect plumbing under the sink a few times per year.
- Keep appliance manuals and warranty papers in one folder.



15. Notes Page

Use this page during estimate appointments.

Question / Item	Notes
Cabinet style	
Countertop material	
Backsplash	
Flooring	
Lighting	
Plumbing	
Electrical	
Permits	
Timeline	
Price	
Concerns	



Schedule Your Free Kitchen Remodeling Consultation

Choosing the right kitchen remodeler does not have to be confusing. Family Home Improvements helps Southern California homeowners improve kitchen functionality, storage, counter space, appliances, design, and overall comfort.

During your free consultation, our team can discuss your goals, review your current kitchen, explain options, and provide a clear written estimate.

Call Family Home Improvements today at (562) 464-0684 or visit familyhomeimprovements.net to request your free quote.

Sources used for this guide: Family Home Improvements Kitchen Remodeling page; FHI Podcast YouTube videos titled 50 Kitchen Remodeling Questions Parts 1-4.