

## Weigh Your Options Before a Do-it-Yourself Remodel

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, homeowner do-it-yourself (DIY) projects account for 20 percent of all home remodeling performed nationwide. While there are a substantial number of weekend warriors out there, remodeling industry professionals report that between 25 and 30 percent of their work comes from fixing DIY debacles.

Some credit the desire among homeowners to tackle repair and remodeling projects to hit television shows like ABC's "Extreme Home Makeover" and the Discovery Channel's "Monster House." The introduction of cable channels with programming dedicated to all things home including HGTV and the DIY Network may inspire homeowners to take on home fixes and decorating challenges as well.

While most professional remodelers understand that homeowners will do some of their own home repairs or small renovations, overwhelmingly they believe that many jobs should be left to the pros.

"The rule of thumb that I always live by is that if a handyman service in your area can do the project, then odds are that a good do-it-yourselfer can do it themselves," says Bob Birner, CGR, CGB of Amazing Siding Corp. in Houston, Texas. "If they don't do it, then that's a good sign that you need a professional."

Birner adds, "Remodelers wouldn't perform open-heart surgery on a loved one without medical expertise. Remodeling is open-heart surgery for the home—only professionals should attempt it."

Still think you can tackle a big remodeling project? Bob Van Cleef, CGR, CGB, GMB, owner of Yankee Housewrights in Jamestown, R.I. cautions all motivated DIYers. "A homeowner should look at a project, consider the worst case scenario and ask, 'If it comes to this, will I know how to fix it?'" says Van Cleef.

Van Cleef and other professionals admit that when it comes to repairs and remodeling their own homes they hire professionals to do it. "I have been in construction my whole life and I still hire a pro to do work at our house, because there are certain things even I wouldn't touch such as electrical, plumbing and framing," says Van Cleef.

### **Advice for Do-it-Yourselfers**

There are some home projects that professional remodelers believe can be tackled by determined DIYers (depending on skill level) such as hanging pictures, interior painting, caulking, changing door knobs and cabinet pulls, and some aesthetic work such as installing crown molding.

If you are willing to put the time and energy into a do-it-yourself home remodel, Barbara Rose Peck, co-owner of S.N. Peck Building, Inc. and Case Handyman Services of Chicago advises:

- Follow product directions. Read everything that comes with the product and take it seriously.
- Get a detailed, illustrated home repair and maintenance book.
- Conduct careful and thorough preparation. Set everything up and protect surrounding surfaces and furniture.
- Practice with the tools.
- Follow safety procedures and use proper safety equipment.

Consumers are cautioned not to take on more than they are capable of doing both in terms of time and skill. "The biggest mistake the weekend handyman makes is to take on a project larger than he can handle in a reasonable amount of time," says Douglas Nelson, CR, CGR of New Spaces in Burnsville, Minn. "I have talked with people who have been remodeling their kitchen for more than two years."

Remember, DIY projects should be fun and suit your skill level. If they're not, then consider hiring a professional.

For information about hiring a remodeler, contact your local home builder association and its affiliated local Remodelers Council at (803) 256-6238. Visit [www.nahb.org/remodel](http://www.nahb.org/remodel) for more information on remodeling.