REMODELING TIPS • July 14, 2026

Remodeling a Room? What You Should Know Before You Start

Remodeling is exciting. Starting without a plan turns your remodel from predictable into a chaotic, over-budget nightmare. Below I'll walk you through what most people do, why it often leads to problems, and how to plan a remodel the right way — like a pro.

What doing it wrong looks like

You tear the room apart without a clear vision of the end result. You might add or remove a wall without considering how it affects the function of the room. Instead of deliberately choosing the focal point and designing the space around it, decisions get made on the fly. Lighting and finishes are selected without direction. Paint is treated as an afterthought rather than planned from the beginning. Then, once the room is already built, you head to the furniture store hoping to find something that fits the space you've created. Starting a remodel without a plan quickly becomes a mosaic of decisions that rarely align with your original vision.

How to do it correctly

The first step to any remodel is understanding the Design Order of a Room:

1. Layout and Function
2. Paint Color and Lighting
3. Furniture (the desired centerpiece of the room)
4. Flooring and Rugs

Layout and Function

The first question we need to answer is how you want the room to feel. Do you want it to feel soft and cozy, or are you looking for something more bold and audacious? The feel of the room is the final result we're working to build — it's the main thing that guides every other decision. Layout and function can't be determined without first understanding the desired feel of the room.

To determine function, ask yourself: if the room were designed and set up perfectly, how would I use it? Where would I walk? Where would I put things, and what would I put there? What conveniences and amenities would be a dream come true if the perfect space existed? Maybe you

want plants in the corner, or maybe you want a mini-fridge, a large TV mounted on the wall, and your trophy buck and turkey mounted beside it. Both of those visions require specific accommodations that should be considered during the design phase. One thing that's often overlooked until it's too late is outlet placement and wood blocking in the wall for mounting heavy things.

Once the vision of how the room will function is clear in your mind, layout becomes a straightforward exercise. That imagined use case answers most layout questions automatically: where people will walk, where storage belongs, and what the focal point of the room will be. Anything left unanswered after you can picture the ideal use of the room is usually easy to resolve — you just need to ask the question.

Paint and Lighting

To begin choosing your wall and ceiling color, paint sheen, and lighting temperature, look back to the desired feel you outlined when developing the layout. If you're after a cozy space, lean toward a warmer lighting temperature and paint colors with a soft, warm undertone to create a comfortable, inviting room. If your goal is a brighter, more energetic or modern space, cooler lighting with more neutral tones will help achieve that feeling.

The goal is to make sure these elements work together cohesively. When lighting and paint are aligned, the color looks the way it was intended on the wall, and the space works together to produce the feel you had in mind from the start.

Putting it into practice

Now that you understand what we're trying to accomplish when selecting paint colors, let's put those principles into practice. It's best to build a palette with three main colors across the room: one neutral color, one main color, and one wildcard color that all fit the desired feel.

If you're after a room that feels soft, comfortable, warm, and inviting — and warm-temperature lighting has been installed — a good main color would be something like Sherwin-Williams Natural Linen. It's bold enough to announce that it's there, yet warm enough to still feel inviting. It's a good color to put at the center of a palette because it's easy to find other colors that match the feel.

Furniture

There are a few important things to understand when selecting a piece of furniture: visual weight, texture, and color. It's possible to walk into a room full of stuff and have it feel empty. It's also possible to walk into a room with only a few items and have it feel too crowded, and you can't quite pinpoint why. Visual weight is the answer. A chair with thin legs and a minimalist design has a very low visual weight. A big, bulky, poofy couch that sits flush to the ground has a heavy visual weight. Your room should have an anchor — something that draws your eye, a centerpiece.

When designing a living room, it makes sense for the centerpiece to be the seating area. Contrary to popular practice, you don't need to push your furniture against the walls. A well-designed living room, when the space allows, has a seating area near the center with an appropriately sized rug, enough walking space behind it to be comfortable, and art, plants, or display pieces along the walls and corners to complement the anchor.

The visual weight of the room should be heaviest where you want the eye to land. In a good example, the couch draws your eye to it (the anchor), and the rug is properly sized — all of the furniture legs sit on the rug, which defines the space as separate from the rest of the room. The couch's texture both contrasts with and fits the space at the same time. Nothing else fights to be the centerpiece; there's one clear anchor and everything else supports it. There's a clear palette, function is prioritized, and many textures work together to make a soft, cozy, relaxing room, with a warm color temperature that aligns with the rest of the design.

Flooring and Rugs

Flooring is often best kept simple. Your main flooring color should blend seamlessly with your palette. Install it in the direction you walk — you want to move with the flooring, not against it. Your flooring direction, combined with rug placement, should tell you where activities happen and how to get there. Your rug should contrast enough with the flooring to stand out while still matching the room's palette.

Here's why an example like that works. The main flooring color matches the palette. The flooring direction tells you which way to walk. The rug is the right size and is placed so you know something is happening in that spot. The change in direction of the lines on the rug reinforces contrast with the flooring and signals where to look — whether that's out the windows or at the art on the wall. When the shiplap on the ceiling runs in alignment with the flooring, there are no competing signals fighting over where to look, which protects the feel of the room. Lighting matters here too: in a bright room, a neutral-to-cool white keeps the whites reading true, where a very warm light would pull the undertones out of the whites and, combined with sunlight through the day, noticeably change the perceived wall color.

In conclusion

Design decisions need to be made before construction starts. If you remodel a room and end up with something pretty to look at but a pain to live with, was the hassle really worth your time and money? Prioritizing function is a crucial part of design that can't be taken too seriously. All the elements need to work together to create an anchor — one focal point that draws your attention, with everything else supporting it. When these elements are properly implemented, you get a space that's cohesive and something you're excited to come home to every day.