

Is It Time to Remodel Your Kitchen?

Besides looks, consider your changing needs when evaluating your space.

Many homeowners determine whether they should remodel their kitchens based on whether their cabinets are worn, their appliances are dated or their countertops are crackled. But there are many other reasons, more important than cosmetic, why a kitchen needs to be remodeled.

The team at The Five Elements suggests the following considerations to help homeowners evaluate the condition of their kitchens and decide if the time is right for a remodel.

- **Adequate space:** Are you satisfied with the amount of counter space, cabinet space and floor space in your kitchen? The position of your refrigerator or the shape of your counter may be taking away useful work space. When replacing a countertop or changing the shape of your kitchen, keep in mind that a total of 158 inches of countertop frontage, 24 inches deep with at least 15 inches of clearance above, is needed to accommodate all uses, including landing area, preparation and work area and storage.
- **Traffic flow:** If there's more than one cook in your household, consider making more room around the main work space. If you enjoy entertaining, you may want an open plan kitchen that allows for more social interaction between the kitchen and other rooms. The width of a walkway should be at least 3 feet, and the width of a work aisle should be at least 42 inches for one cook and at least 4 feet for multiple cooks.
- **Children:** Depending on whether you have children and what their ages are, your kitchen may need to be remodeled. Dated appliances and the design of your kitchen can be hazardous for young children.

If you're in the process of extending your family, consider making more room for cooking larger meals and lowering cabinets for easier access to children's food. And keep in mind that microwave ovens should be installed 3 inches below the principal user's shoulder but no more than 54 inches above the floor to avoid accidents. And countertops with sharp corners if kids are around.

- **Efficiency:** If your appliances are dated, they may be costing you more money than you realize. Technological advances in dishwashers, disposals and refrigerators could save you a considerable amount of money and may be well worth the investment. For example, buying a dishwasher with low energy consumption, delay timer and economy cycle or half-load button will save both water and money.
- **Universal design:** Is your kitchen accessible to people with disabilities? Will you be able to use your kitchen safely as you get older? Considering these issues is vital in a kitchen remodel. Employing universal-design techniques in the remodel will help assure that the space is as accessible to or usable by all people, regardless of age, size or physical ability, without the need for adaptation or specialized design later.
- **Location:** Thinking about adding a deck to the side or back of your house? Incorporating a door into the layout of your kitchen would be a great convenience for outdoor entertaining. You also may want to rearrange the position of windows to allow more or less sunlight or to allow you to watch your children play in the yard. When rearranging the layout of your kitchen, be aware that the clear opening of a doorway should be at least 32 inches wide, which would require a door that's at least 34 inches wide. And keep in mind that a cooking surface should never be located under an operable window.

Before you remodel your kitchen, make a checklist of major and minor problems and keep notes of the features you dislike and like the most. When it comes time to sit down with a designer, he'll know exactly how to suit your needs, taste and style.

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