

Don’t Skimp

It's good business to take a close look at the costs of any remodeling project. We work closely with our clients to trim any fat from their budget. We're always looking for strategies that may actually improve the finished house while staying within our clients' financial targets. We call this process value engineering.

But some cuts can go too deep. These cuts are different than value engineering, we call them skimping. Skimping is not an investment. When you skimp, you save a few dollars today only to pay more in the future. This category of cost reduction can compromise the performance of your remodeled home and put its value at risk.

But when is it better to pay a bit more up front to ensure that your project performs as promised and results in your complete satisfaction for years to come?

Much of what you should not skimp on is behind the finishes. Because you can't see or touch these components, understanding their value is critical. These include areas that save energy, protect against moisture damage, enhance durability, or reduce maintenance chores and costs. In almost every case, it's worthwhile to pay now instead of suffering the consequences later.

**The Structure.** It probably goes without saying, but the quality of the foundation and structural frame of your home or addition is paramount and should never be sacrificed for budget reasons.

A professional remodeler will work to optimize, but never compromise, whatever foundation and framing system is appropriate for the project.

**Energy and Water Efficiency**. The ongoing costs of home energy and potable water are rising and are likely to continue. It makes good financial sense to invest in systems and products that achieve comprehensive and reliable savings for these resources and their costs.

Vital components include properly applied insulation, high-performance windows, right-sized and efficient heating and cooling equipment, adequate fresh-air ventilation, brand-name appliances, and water-saving faucets, showerheads, toilets, and water heating systems. Consider including these items in the budget at the highest level of quality and efficiency you can afford.

**Exterior Finishes.** Your home's ability to defend itself against weather conditions from the summer sun, high winds and heavy rain is critical to its durability, maintenance and performance.

If replacing or adding exterior finishes is part of your remodeling project, resist the temptation to downgrade the roofing, siding, trim, and other components for the sake of saving a few dollars. As with your home's structure and primary systems, it's smarter to pay a little more up front for exterior finishes that stand the test of time and weather. In the long run, you'll spend less money and time fixing loose clapboards, repainting the trim and replacing the roof.

**Drainage.** The problems associated with a poor gutter, downspout, and rainwater removal system are legend .. and very costly. Worse, they usually aren't apparent right away. Over time, moisture damage caused by poor site drainage leads to latent defects that can undermine the structural integrity of your house.

A well-designed drainage scheme within a larger scope of a remodeling project effectively captures and directs rainwater off of the roof and away from the foundation. In this way water can't find its way and fester along the foundation, under the roof shingles, or behind the walls.

Materials choices vary, but trust your remodeling contractor to understand the dynamics of storm water management and provide your home with what it takes to deliver a dependable solution for your new home.

**Flooring.** There is no other surface inside your house that takes as much abuse as your floors. If new or replacement floor finishes are part of your home improvement plans, it makes sense to buy the best-quality carpeting, tile, wood, and resilient materials your budget permits.

In addition to holding up to foot traffic, spills, cleaning solutions, sudden impact and other hazards of daily life, your floors must retain their good looks to maintain your satisfaction and reduce repair and replacement costs as long as possible.

Finally, and perhaps most important, you should not skimp on your remodeler. If you are going to invest time and money in an extensive home improvement project, seek out and be willing to invest in a true remodeling professional. You'll be buying a treasure chest of skill, knowledge, and experience that will be well worth the price.