

Spring HOME IMPROVEMENT



Home



Garden



Lawn



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Plumbing modernization: 3 things to consider



Have you noticed water leaks, pressure changes or strange noises coming from your pipes? It might be time to modernize your plumbing. Here are three things to consider before getting started.

1. ASSESS THE SITUATION

Before starting, evaluate the overall condition of your plumbing system. Carefully inspect the pipes for signs of leaks, rust or wear and tear. Then, determine whether key components, such as the water heater or sinks, need to be replaced.

2. CREATE A BUDGET

Based on your observations, make a list

of the necessary repairs and materials you need to estimate your total costs. If necessary, choose more affordable materials like cross-linked polyethylene (PEX) pipes.

3. MEET REGULATIONS

You can save time and money by tackling small plumbing updates yourself. But, by hiring a certified professional, you can be sure all your new installations meet current plumbing standards.

Your modernization project deserves to be done right. Hire a certified plumber for the best results.

“Should I replace my bathtub?”



Ahh, don't you just love to unwind in a bath? Whether you prefer to soak with bubbles or without, there's nothing like relaxing in a tub of hot water. Are you wondering if your old bathtub needs to be replaced? To make an informed decision, consider these factors.

- **Functional problems.** Does your bathtub leak? Is the tap broken? Can you see cracks, rust or mould? Don't wait for the damage to worsen and turn into an expensive repair. Act now.

- **Poor accessibility.** Does someone in your household have a mobility challenge that makes getting in and out of your current

bathtub increasingly difficult? Opting for a more accessible model, such as one with a door and a built-in seat, is a sensible idea.

- **Unightly appearance.** Does your bathtub look outdated or clash with your bathroom's current style? Say goodbye to it without hesitation.

Have you decided to swap your old bathtub for a modern model? Podium, alcove, clawfoot or freestanding—you have so many design options to choose from. Visit your local specialty shops to find the bathtub where you can relax to your heart's content. Don't forget to hire a certified plumber for an expert installation.

How to decide between a deck or pavers in an outdoor remodel

Outdoor living spaces have become sought-after commodities among homeowners. A 2022 survey of homeowners conducted by the New Home Trends Institute found that open yards are less appealing to home buyers than they once were. The survey noted that just 28 percent of respondents chose open yards, while 65 percent preferred patios and 55 percent chose decks. Green spaces remain popular, but the survey indicates that many would-be home buyers also want an outdoor living area to make the most of their home exteriors.

Homeowners aspiring to transform their home exterior spaces typically must decide between a deck or pavers when the time comes to plan such areas. That's a personal choice homeowners must make, but those without strong feelings on either option can consider these tips as they try to decide if a deck or pavers are for them.

- **Determine your budget.** Budget is a notable variable with any home renovation project, and the addition of an outdoor living space is no exception. The materials homeowners choose will ultimately determine the cost of each project. For example, composite decking materials tend to cost significantly more than wood decks, but that higher price tag also comes with less maintenance and typically a longer life span. Pavers may prove less expensive than composite decking, but those cost savings may be negligible if a yard requires extensive excavation to prepare an area for a new patio. It requires patience, but gathering estimates of the various materials can serve as a good starting point when planning an outdoor living space. In addition, homeowners must recognize that material costs can fluctuate considerably over time, as such prices are often contingent on a range of variables, including supply chain is-

sues. So it's best to gather estimates in a short period of time to make the most accurate price comparisons.

- **Identify your vision for the space.**

Homeowners who have a vision for their outdoor living space, even if they are not sure about which material they prefer, may find the process goes more quickly and even more smoothly than those who are unsure about what they want. Those who prefer a flexible multi-use space may be best going with pavers, as the spaces can be easily converted and areas simply designated as one might differentiate between rooms inside the home. For example, an outdoor living room can be separated with the installation of a pavilion and fireplace, while kitchen and dining areas can be separate spaces on the same patio. Decks tend to be less flexible, which might make them ideal for homeowners who prefer an outdoor dining area but don't need a more expansive entertaining space. Of course, decks can be as big as homeowners choose, which can make the spaces more multi-functional.

- **Recognize both may be in your best interest.** Homeowners also should know that many outdoor living spaces feature both a deck and a paver patio. Homeowners may like an elevated deck that steps down to a patio, which can easily distinguish between the spaces and establish the area as a multifunctional space.

Homeowners planning outdoor living space projects may find themselves choosing between a deck and pavers. Each option can work, and homeowners may even want to combine the two.



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A rundown on roofing projects

No two home renovation projects are the same. Some projects are highly detailed undertakings that take months if not years from start to finish, while others can be tackled by skilled do-it-yourselfers over the course of a single weekend. Though each project is different, categorizing renovations as needs or wants can help homeowners determine when the time is right to go forward.

Roof replacement projects typically fall into the “need” category. A decaying roof can jeopardize the safety and security of a home and lead to additional issues, like water damage. It’s unwise to delay roof replacement projects when signs of a decaying roof start to appear. Homeowners who are starting to see such indicators can look to this rundown of roof replacement projects as they begin the process of replacing their roof.

COST

Roof replacement costs vary considerably depending on a host of variables. Materials, location and the cost of labor, dimensions of the roof, and even choice of contractor all affect the cost of the project. The home renovation experts at Angi indicate the average roof replacement project costs \$9,500. Asphalt is among the more affordable roofing materials, costing an average of \$1 to \$1.20 per square foot, according to Nerdwallet. Slate roofs will be more expensive, costing anywhere from \$10 to \$30 per square foot.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Homeowners may blanch at the cost of a roof replacement project, particularly if they choose a more expensive material. However, it’s important to keep life expectancy in mind when receiving roof estimates. Many homeowners never replace a roof twice, making this a potentially costly but ultimately one-time expense. Though slate roofs are expensive, homeowners may find it reassuring that estimates from various roofing resources indicate slate roofs come with a life expectancy ranging from 50 to 200 years. By contrast, Nerdwallet estimates an asphalt roof lasts around 10 to 20 years, while others suggest such roofs can last as long as 30 years.

MATERIALS

Choice of materials is arguably the most significant decision homeowners will make when replacing a roof. The experts at This Old House report that materials typically account for 55 to 65 percent of the overall cost of a roof replacement project. Decisions regarding roof materials will be affected by budget, local climate (certain materials are better suited to particular climates than others), aesthetic appeal, and required maintenance. It’s also important that homeowners consider the material warranty of each roofing product. Some materials offer longer warranties than others, which can provide a measure of security to homeowners investing so much in the project.

A roof replacement project is not a renovation that can be delayed when signs the roof is fading start to appear. Homeowners are urged to consider a wide range of variables before committing to a project.

Did You KNOW?

Light-emitting diode bulbs (LEDs) are energy-efficient and durable options.

LEDs convert electricity into light instead of heat, and increasingly are used in a wide range of products, including lighting fixtures. According to Energy Star®, LEDs produce light up to 90 percent more efficiently than incandescent light bulbs. LEDs also do not typically “burn out” or fail, like other types of bulbs. Because of their performance benefits, homeowners may be interested in switching over to LED bulbs to power their existing lighting fixtures. Generally speaking, LED bulbs can work in most non-LED fixtures, provided the base type matches the socket. The LED bulb also should be rated for the same line voltage for the fixture. Also, the fixture should not be enclosed, such as glass-encased ceiling lights or certain outdoor fixtures. The lack of ventilation can cause heat buildup, leading to damage or failure. In such instances, one should purchase LEDs specifically rated for enclosed fixtures.



“My laminate countertop is looking sad. How can I transform it without breaking the bank?”

Does your laminate kitchen countertop look like it’s seen better days? Perhaps its style is simply outdated. Good news! If it’s still sturdy, you don’t have to replace it. There are several ways to give it a makeover. Here are some affordable options.

- **Paint it.** Painting is an easy and affordable way to transform your countertop. Proper surface preparation is key to a smooth, lasting finish, so start by cleaning, sanding and repairing any cracks. Then, apply a primer, followed by several thin coats of paint designed for laminate to achieve a smooth, lasting surface.

- **Cover it with self-adhesive vinyl.** You can choose from a host of different finishes, including terrazzo, marble or wood. Simply measure the surface, cut the adhesive paper to the right size and apply it carefully to avoid air bubbles.

- **Coat it with concrete.** For a sophisticated, modern finish, apply a thin layer of concrete overlay. This method requires some skill, and you’ll need to seal the surface with resin or varnish to protect it.

With these clever solutions, your old countertop can look as good as new. Visit your local home improvement stores to find everything you need.





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How to spot foundation issues at home

Home ownership can be a rewarding endeavor and a good investment over time. But homes require consistent upkeep to ensure a property remains safe, a condition of ownership that renters typically do not need to concern themselves with.

Foundation issues are a component of home ownership that can be easy to forget, as such concerns are not necessarily evident in frequently visited areas of a home. A foundation provides structural integrity for the entire home, so addressing damage is essential. The experts at This Old House indicate that some foundation issues can be relatively easy and inexpensive to address. Other issues may not be so simple, especially if they challenge the structural integrity of a home.

Learning to recognize foundation issues can help homeowners sort through small problems and big ones. But what are signs of foundation problems? Consider these potential issues, as noted by This Old House, Robbie Breaux & Team Real Broker, LLC and Bay Crawl Space Foundation Repair.

- **Cracks in walls:** Cracks appearing in foundation walls, drywall or plaster, especially diagonal or stair-step cracks forming near doorways, windows or corners, might be indicative of foundation movement. If a crack has formed in a living space, something is likely moving below since floors are supported from the

foundation upward. Cracks thicker than one-quarter of an inch in foundation walls or home walls can be a problem.

- **Sagging porches and stoops:**

Notable sagging of porches or stoops can indicate that a house is sinking or changing faster than other areas.

- **Separation between door and window frames and walls:**

Gaps can form around windows and doors if the foundation is shifting. The gaps that form can lead to water and pest infiltration if left untreated, causing even more issues.

- **Cabinets and countertops separating from walls:**

Homeowners who notice considerable space forming between cabinets or countertops and the wall indicate that the frame of the home is out of square. That likely means a foundation is settling or sinking.

- **Squeaky, bouncy or sagging floors:**

While these issues in floors may not always result from foundation issues, they often indicate that moisture has invaded the basement or crawl space. That moisture may have gained access through a cracked or compromised foundation.

- **Leaning or cracked chimney:** If a chimney resembles the Leaning Tower of Pisa, it could be a sign of possible foundation issues causing settling or sinking.

Bringing in a professional to assess potential foundation issues is a good idea. While certain foundation problems can be remedied by homeowners themselves, it's best to rule out more serious issues that may require professional expertise before going the DIY route.

Sights & sounds that indicate floors should be replaced soon



Nice flooring draws immediate attention when entering a home. Natural wood floors tend to instantly impress, while the right kitchen flooring materials can create the welcoming feeling many homeowners strive to establish in the most popular room in the home.

Stunning floors are hard to miss, and floors that are well past their prime are equally noticeable. Aging floors may fall somewhere between fading and failing to live up to homeowners' standards. Fading floors may not need to be replaced immediately, but the following are some signs that indicate existing floors are nearing their expiration date.

- **Soft spots:** A floor should not give when stepped on. Soft spots could be indicative of water damage caused by any number of factors. Some water damage is caused by mopping the floor with a soaking wet mop, while burst pipes also contribute to water damage that can cause soft spots. A single soft spot on the floor may necessitate a relatively simple repair, but various soft spots indicate extensive damage that might be affecting the floor, subflooring or both. In the latter instance, homeowners should consider a full floor replacement.

- **Creaking floors:** Creaking floors are among the more annoying issues that can arise in a home. In such homes, residents

feel as though every step they or their housemates take is being announced. In addition, creaking floors can awake light sleepers, including young children. The floor experts at Discount Flooring Depot note that uneven subfloor could be the culprit behind creaking floors. Though that does not necessarily require a floor replacement, it can be hard to lift existing floors and then refit them after the subflooring has been addressed. That's especially so if low-quality laminate flooring was installed. So while creaking floors may not require a full floor replacement, it's an outcome homeowners who can no longer live with the noise can prepare themselves for.

- **Dated look:** Of course, some floors simply look like the product of a bygone era. Various factors, including location, affect the resale value of a home, but Realtor.com reports that hardwood floors are preferred by both home buyers and renters. In addition, Realtor.com estimates that wood floors could provide a return as high as 80 percent of the initial investment when homeowners sell their homes. If existing flooring looks dated, it might be time to bring it up to speed with something more modern.

A home's flooring is bound to draw the attention of residents and visitors alike. Homeowners who replace their flooring can ensure that attention is drawn for all the right reasons



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Unique features for outdoor living spaces ●

Outdoor living spaces are wildly popular. A 2023 study conducted by Brown Jordan Outdoor Kitchens found that 63 percent of homeowners indicated they would prioritize an outdoor living space if they were to remodel their homes.

Homeowners cite a multitude of motivations regarding their interest in upgrading their outdoor living spaces. The 2024 U.S. Outdoor Trends Study from Houzz Research found that more than half of homeowners who participated in the study (51 percent) want to renovate to improve aesthetics, while 37 percent hoped to enhance entertaining spaces. One-third view renovating outdoor spaces as a great way to extend the living space of their homes. Homeowners who share these motivations and are committed to renovating their outdoor living areas can look to these unique features to fulfill all three goals.

• **WATER FOUNTAIN:** Water fountains can serve as stunning focal points in outdoor living spaces.

Outdoor fountains are ideal for anyone hoping to create an outdoor oasis, as few sights and sounds promote a calming atmosphere as effectively as softly flowing water in a cast stone fountain. Fountains also attract birds, which can add to the soothing sounds of a backyard escape.

• **SHADE STRUCTURE:** Gone are the days when homeowners' most accessible option to create shade on patios and decks were umbrellas extending out from the center of outdoor dining tables. Pergolas and gazebos are now available in a wide range of shapes and styles, making these a must-have for homeowners who want to entertain while ensuring guests remain comfortable on hot days. A hardtop gazebo with roof hooks to accommodate fans, lights and even plants can serve as an aesthetically appealing safe haven from summer sun.

• **HAMMOCK:** A hammock is a simple yet unique, functional and affordable feature to consider for an outdoor living space. If the existing land-



scaping allows, situate a hammock between two tall, sturdy trees. Such a sight can contribute to a welcoming and calming ambiance in an outdoor living space, and provide extra room to lounge and relax beneath the shade of trees.

• **GAME ZONE:** If entertaining is the primary motivation behind an outdoor living space renovation, then designate part of the space for games and activities. A designated bocce court will draw visitors who want to relax and enjoy a little friendly competition away from dining areas and other spaces. A small putting green can allow golfers to work on their short games, and such spaces can offer ample opportunities for fun if homeowners are inclined to host putting contests during backyard barbecues. Whatever game tickles homeowners' fancy, designating a space exclusively for games can up the entertainment value of an outdoor living space.

The popularity of outdoor living spaces remains high. Homeowners hoping to enhance their existing spaces can consider a number of unique features to meet their goals.

Did You KNOW?

A well-manicured lawn appeals to homeowners when they look out their windows. But such a view also can look nice when homeowners peruse their bank statements after selling a property. According to the "2025 Remodeling Impact Report: Outdoor Features" from the National Association of Realtors®, standard lawn care service yields an estimated cost recovery of

217 percent. Landscape maintenance, with an estimated cost recovery of 104 percent, and an overall landscape upgrade (100 percent) also yield great returns for homeowners. The NAR® report also noted the effects of such projects related to homeowners' desire to spend time on their property. Among homeowners who participated in the NAR® report and committed to standard lawn care service, 58 percent indicated they had a greater desire to be at home since completing the project, while 46 percent indicated they have an increased sense of enjoyment when spending time at home.

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Cost-effective curb appeal boosters

REFRESH THE FRONT DOOR

Painting the front door can add brightness and improve the look of a home's entryway. Most exterior paint costs between \$30 and \$40 per gallon, so this is undeniably a budget-friendly improvement. If money allows, replacing the door altogether will generate bang for your buck.

IMPROVE OR ADD LANDSCAPING ELEMENTS

Landscaping should be designed to highlight the home's best features. It should look symmetrical and feel manicured. If it's not possible to plant new flowers or bushes, simply cleaning up debris and weeds, and trimming existing greenery can make it feel neater and more polished.

CLEAN UP

Power-washing the siding, cement walkways and garage door can create instant impact. It's amazing how much dirt and mildew can reduce the luster of a home.

Cleaning off years of grime can be a fast and inexpensive refresh.

RESEAL THE DRIVEWAY

Make sure the driveway is clean and tidy. If it has cracks or discoloration, filling in cracks and applying a new coat of sealer will make a big difference. Homeowners can hire someone to reseal the driveway or do the work on their own.

ADD MORE LIGHTING

Updating front porch lights and accent lights around the property will cast a more positive glow on a home, both literally and figuratively.

ADD A SEATING AREA

If space by the front door allows, add a bench or some chairs to create a welcoming seating area. A potted plant or two nearby will help the area seem intentional. Improving curb appeal doesn't have to cost a lot of money. A few easy touches can boost the look of any property.



One shouldn't judge a book by its cover. However, that often is hard to do, particularly when it comes to homes. Curb appeal bears significant influence regarding how a property is perceived. A property that is neat and aesthetically appealing probably will be preferable to one that looks like the homeowners did not maintain it.

Boosting curb appeal is a common focus of sellers before listing a property. But what can those who don't have big budgets for major overhauls do to improve their curb appeal? Plenty of projects can offer maximum output with minimal investment.



A guide to survive lengthy home renovations

Renovations can transform homes into spaces that mirror homeowners' dreams. Regardless of the scope of a project, a home renovation will involve some level of disruption to residents' daily lives. Lengthy, more involved projects may impact daily life considerably.

most chaotic. Demolition days can be noisy and messy, and maybe those are days when you plan to be away from the house for a few hours.

Renovation timelines vary depending on the scale of the project. Painting may take a week or two, while a kitchen or bathroom remodel may last anywhere from four to 16 weeks. Larger projects like adding a room can take between three and six months, say the experts at John Merrill Homes. Projects also often take longer than expected, as surprises may be in store once homeowners begin peeling back the layers in homes. Homeowners about to embark on lengthy renovation projects can embrace these tips to come through on the other side relatively unscathed.

CHOOSE YOUR TIMING

The timing of a renovation may have to coincide with contractor availability or having the budget to fund the project. But homeowners should consider life circumstances and season before starting a project. You might not have the energy to take on a project right before the holidays. If kids play on sports teams that require a lot of travel, it might be better to wait until the season winds down. Figure out what you can realistically take on to reduce the likelihood that you'll feel overwhelmed.

PLAN ACCORDINGLY

Creating and sticking to a daily schedule, and knowing what is happening each day, can keep a project on track. It also allows you to determine which days will be the

STORE ITEMS OUT OF HARM'S WAY

Invest in a storage solution for the duration of the renovation. Decluttering and removing items before the project is in full force will make it easier to work and renovations tend to kick up a lot of construction dust, after all.

DESIGNATE A SAFE ZONE

Establish a room or rooms as work-free areas to which residents can retreat. If multiple rooms are being renovated, you might consider spending time with a family member or friend, or getting a hotel for a short duration until the bulk of disruption dies down.

LOWER YOUR STANDARDS

Homecooked meals may be your standard most days of the week, but it's alright to be a bit lax when remodeling projects begin. Relying on frozen foods or takeout might be necessary for a little while.

Remodeling projects can be disruptive and stressful, but certain strategies can make it easier to get through projects without too much disruption.



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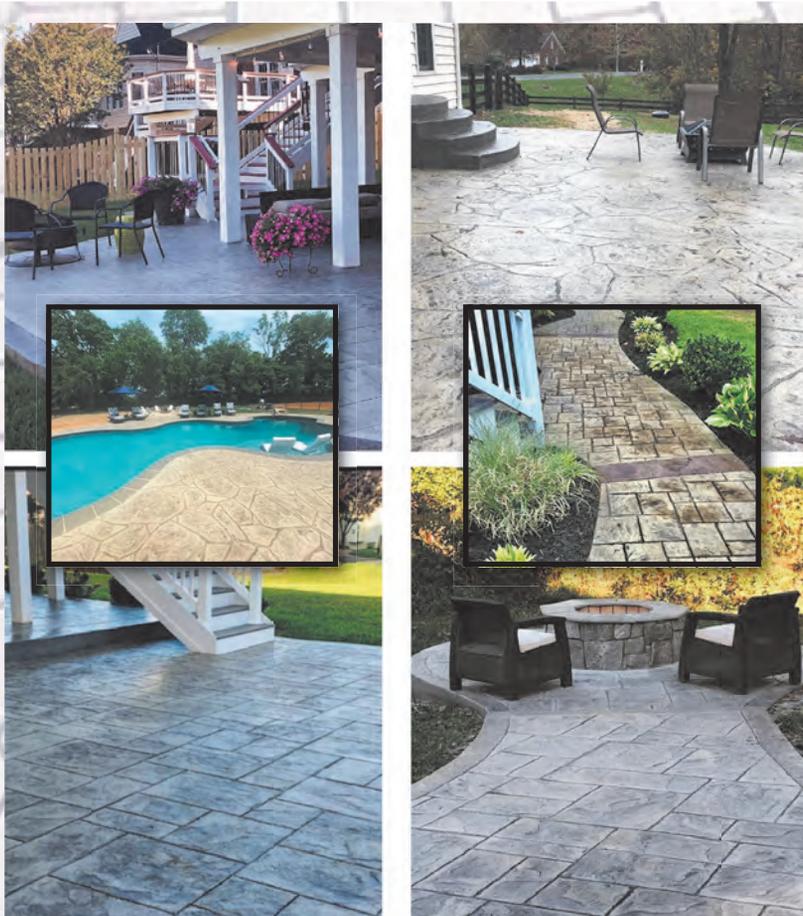
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