Home Remodeling Field Guide

A room-by-room guide to planning scope, sequencing, surfaces and trade coordination before construction begins.

01 DEFINE THE ROOM
02 RESOLVE THE ASSEMBLY
03 COORDINATE THE TRADES
04 SELECT THE FINISHES

Modern material. Practical expertise.

A remodel is a chain of decisions

The strongest projects resolve what is behind the surface before choosing what goes on top of it. Layout, structure, utilities, moisture management, substrate preparation and finish selection should move in a deliberate order.

Begin with the room you need

Write down what is not working now, who uses the room, what must remain, what can move and what a successful day in the finished space should feel like. This creates a useful scope before product browsing expands the number of choices.

Separate decisions from selections

Stage	What it resolves
Decision	Keep the layout or move it. Repair the substrate or replace it. Use one finish family or create a feature surface.
Selection	Choose the specific tile, color, grout, trim, fixture or surface after the project constraints are known.
Specification	Confirm size, finish, quantity, approved use, installation system, edge treatment and current manufacturer instructions.

Where J&J fits

J&J helps connect material selection to the finished room and the installation. Structural, electrical, plumbing, mechanical and permit decisions should be handled by the appropriate licensed professionals for the project.

Set whole home priorities

Even a one-room project touches the rest of the house through circulation, dust, utilities, floor heights, deliveries and visual continuity.

Scope boundary Mark exactly which rooms, walls, fixtures and finishes are included. List exclusions in writing.

Existing conditions Document dimensions, structure, utilities, moisture, ventilation and substrate before committing to a finish plan.

Decision owners Name who approves design, cost, schedule and field changes. A project slows when approval authority is unclear.

Long lead items Identify cabinetry, plumbing fixtures, specialty tile, slabs, glass and appliances that can control the schedule.

Temporary living Plan access, cooking, bathing, pets, dust containment, parking and material storage during construction.

Continuity Decide which floors, paint undertones, metal finishes and trim details should repeat across rooms.

A useful order of operations

Investigate → define scope → establish budget → design → verify selections → price complete scope → order long-lead materials → protect the home → build → inspect → close out.

Kitchen

Plan the surfaces around how the room works

A kitchen remodel succeeds when circulation, storage, appliances, lighting and surfaces are resolved as one system. The backsplash and floor should support the cabinets and work surfaces rather than compete with them.

Decide before selecting

- Keep, reface or replace the cabinets
- Confirm appliance sizes and utility locations before cabinet release
- Choose countertop movement before finalizing backsplash pattern
- Resolve floor transitions at every doorway and adjoining room

Material direction

Porcelain and ceramic are common starting points for floors and backsplashes. Glass, marble, mosaics and patterned tile work well as controlled accents. Quartz, granite and other surface materials should be reviewed at full scale when movement is prominent.

Typical sequence

Document the existing room; finalize layout and appliance specifications; complete structural, electrical, plumbing and mechanical rough work; prepare floors and walls; install cabinets and surfaces; template or fabricate as required; set tile; grout, trim and finish.

Watch for Do not order the backsplash from a small sample before the countertop, lighting and cabinet undertones are understood. Outlet locations and edge conditions should be included in the layout conversation.

Primary Bathroom

Treat the shower as an assembly

The primary bathroom carries more technical risk than its square footage suggests. Waterproofing, slopes, penetrations, ventilation, lighting, storage and finish alignment all meet in a compact area.

Decide before selecting

- Confirm whether the layout moves drains, supplies or walls
- Select the shower system before tile installation begins
- Coordinate field tile, shower-floor mosaic, niche, curb and trim
- Choose slip-conscious flooring and a maintenance level the owner accepts

Material direction

Porcelain is a versatile field material for floors and walls. Mosaics can follow shower-floor geometry when rated for the application. Natural stone can add depth, but its care requirements should be understood. Large format reduces visible joints but raises substrate, handling and layout demands.

Typical sequence

Measure and investigate; finalize plumbing and lighting plans; select the waterproofing and drain approach; rough utilities; prepare and waterproof; flood-test when required; tile in a planned sequence; grout and seal where appropriate; install fixtures and glass.

Watch for A beautiful tile cannot correct poor drainage, inadequate waterproofing or an unplanned niche. Review elevations before rough-in so valves, outlets, sconces, mirrors and tile lines relate intentionally.

Hall Bathroom and Powder Room

Spend where a small area changes the experience

Secondary bathrooms often need to handle more traffic, tighter dimensions and a clearer cost ceiling. Because the footprint is smaller, a focused finish can make the room feel considered without making every surface expensive.

Decide before selecting

- Decide whether the tub or shower remains in place
- Use repeatable, serviceable products in high-use rooms
- Choose one visual lead: floor, vanity, wall or mirror
- Plan storage and towel placement before closing walls

Material direction

Ceramic and porcelain offer broad value for walls and floors. Patterned tile can define a powder room. Subway formats are flexible because proportion, orientation and grout can shift the character without changing the basic shape.

Typical sequence

Confirm reuse versus replacement; document shutoffs and utilities; order long-lead fixtures; complete demolition and repairs; rough plumbing and electrical; prepare wet areas; install surfaces; finish fixtures, accessories and paint.

Watch for Avoid crowding a small room with several competing focal points. Confirm door swings, vanity depth and toilet clearances before ordering.

Entry and Mudroom

Design for water grit and transitions

Entries and mudrooms are threshold spaces. They absorb water, grit, shoes, pets and daily traffic while connecting exterior conditions to the rest of the home.

Decide before selecting

- Map the wettest and highest-traffic paths
- Plan seating, hooks and closed storage around actual routines
- Resolve height changes between tile, wood, LVP and exterior doors
- Confirm heating, moisture and cleaning expectations

Material direction

Porcelain is often a strong starting point because of its design range and hard-surface character. Stone-look and patterned formats can establish identity. Mosaics or smaller formats may help in compact or geometrically complex areas.

Typical sequence

Confirm exterior water management first; investigate the subfloor; establish finished-floor heights; rough heat or electrical systems; flatten and prepare the substrate; install tile and transitions; finish millwork and storage.

Watch for Do not treat the transition strip as an afterthought. Floor thickness, underlayment, movement and door clearance should be coordinated before either adjacent floor is installed.

Living Areas and Fireplaces

Use material to anchor the room

Living spaces usually benefit from restraint. A fireplace, feature wall or continuous floor should organize the room and work with furniture, sightlines and natural light.

Decide before selecting

- Identify the view that should carry the strongest material statement
- Confirm heat and clearance requirements for the appliance or firebox
- Choose a hearth, return and exposed-edge strategy
- Review large patterns from the normal viewing distance

Material direction

Porcelain slabs and large-format tile can create broad fields. Marble, granite and other natural stone provide unique movement. Ceramic, glass or dimensional tile can create a more tactile feature wall when approved for the setting.

Typical sequence

Verify appliance and code requirements; finalize elevations; confirm framing and backing; rough electrical or media; prepare the substrate; dry-plan directional material; install hearth and surround; complete trim and adjacent finishes.

Watch for Scale matters more than the sample. Veining, panel seams, mantle position, television height and the stopping point of the finish should be drawn together before material is cut.

Laundry and Utility Areas

Make maintenance simple

Laundry rooms need reliable floors, useful light, appliance access and enough working surface to support repetitive tasks. The finishes should tolerate the way the room is actually cleaned and serviced.

Decide before selecting

- Confirm appliance dimensions, doors and service clearances
- Plan shutoffs, drain pans and leak response
- Provide task lighting and reachable storage
- Choose floors and base details around water exposure

Material direction

Porcelain and ceramic are durable starting points for floors, backsplashes and utility walls when product-rated. Pattern can add energy to a small room, while quieter fields make it easier to see dirt or dropped items.

Typical sequence

Verify utilities and ventilation; order appliances; repair or reinforce the floor; rough plumbing and electrical; prepare the substrate; install floor and wall finishes; set cabinetry and tops; connect and test appliances.

Watch for Do not trap shutoffs or service panels behind finishes or appliances. Confirm that machines can be removed without damaging counters, door casing or adjacent flooring.

Basement and Lower Level

Solve moisture before finishes

A basement remodel should begin with water, humidity, drainage, egress and mechanical access. Finish selection comes after the below-grade conditions are understood.

Decide before selecting

- Investigate active leaks, vapor and seasonal humidity
- Protect access to cleanouts, valves, panels and equipment
- Plan egress, ceiling constraints and sound control
- Choose flooring around slab condition and moisture testing

Material direction

Porcelain can suit hard-surface zones when the slab and assembly are appropriate. Luxury vinyl plank may provide a warmer visual field and easier replacement, but substrate flatness and manufacturer moisture limits still apply.

Typical sequence

Diagnose water sources; complete drainage, envelope and mechanical work; test and prepare the slab; frame with appropriate clearances; rough utilities; close walls; install flooring and transitions; commission equipment and verify access.

Watch for A cosmetic moisture coating is not a substitute for diagnosis. Materials, adhesives and underlayments must be selected around measured conditions and the manufacturer’s requirements.

Outdoor Living Areas

Start with drainage climate and exposure

Patios, terraces, porches and pool-adjacent spaces need materials and assemblies selected for weather, water, movement and underfoot conditions—not only for visual continuity with the interior.

Decide before selecting

- Define the exposure to rain, sun, freeze-thaw and pool chemicals
- Establish drainage and finished elevations away from the building
- Choose an installation method around the site and substrate
- Plan thresholds, steps, edges and replacement access

Material direction

Exterior-rated porcelain pavers offer controlled color and stone- or wood-inspired looks. Natural stone can provide authentic variation but requires stone-specific evaluation. Texture and rating should be reviewed for the exact setting.

Typical sequence

Survey grades and drainage; confirm structural capacity where elevated; choose the assembly; resolve door thresholds and flashing; prepare base or substrate; install with required joints; complete drainage details and final cleaning.

Watch for Exterior suitability is product- and system-specific. Confirm current manufacturer instructions, local project requirements, slip needs and freeze-thaw exposure before purchase.

Control the sequence

Remodeling schedules work when prerequisites are visible. A finish installer should not be discovering unresolved framing, waterproofing, appliance, cabinet or utility decisions after material arrives.

Phase	Completion condition
1 Investigate	Measure, photograph, open limited areas where needed, test conditions and identify professional or permit requirements.
2 Define	Write the scope, allowances, exclusions, owner responsibilities and decision dates.
3 Design	Resolve layout, elevations, lighting, plumbing, surfaces, transitions and edge conditions.
4 Procure	Verify quantities, current lead times, dye lots, fabrication steps, delivery access and storage.
5 Prepare	Protect the house, complete demolition and rough work, inspect, waterproof and prepare substrates.
6 Install	Follow the agreed layout and product systems. Record field changes before they are covered.
7 Close out	Test fixtures, complete punch work, document care guidance and retain product information.

Build a complete budget

The tile price per square foot is only one line in a remodeling budget. A credible plan carries the assembly, labor, delivery, waste, preparation, fabrication, protection and finishing work required to make the selected material successful.

Budget by scope rather than by product

- Design, engineering, surveys and permits where applicable
- Demolition, disposal, protection and temporary facilities
- Structural, plumbing, electrical and mechanical work
- Substrate repair, flattening, waterproofing and underlayment
- Field tile, mosaics, trim, grout, mortar, membranes and sealers
- Labor, specialty cutting, slab fabrication, glass and finish carpentry
- Delivery, storage, access equipment, cleaning and closeout
- Contingency for concealed conditions and approved changes

Control changes in writing

A useful change record states what changed, why, the added or reduced cost, the schedule effect and who approved it. Small verbal changes accumulate quickly when they are not recorded.

Use allowances carefully

An allowance is a placeholder, not a finished selection. It should state what it covers, the assumed quantity, whether tax and delivery are included, and what happens when the final choice is above or below the allowance.

Prepare for the selection meeting

Bring enough information to connect inspiration with the actual room. The goal is not to choose every product in one sitting; it is to narrow the field without creating downstream conflicts.

Bring

- Plans, measurements, elevations or clear room photographs
- Cabinet, countertop, paint, flooring and fixture samples already selected
- Inspiration images with notes about what you like in each
- Known performance requirements and maintenance preferences
- Budget range, construction schedule and required decision dates
- Installer, builder, designer or architect contact information

Ask

- Is the exact product approved for this floor, wall, wet area or exterior use?
- What variation should we expect across the full order?
- Which trims, mosaics, grout and setting materials coordinate?
- What does the installer need to know before ordering?
- How much waste, lead time and reorder risk should be carried?

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