

Chic updates on the cheap

Experts offer their best tips for ways to save in a home remodel



"If you're doing your own demo, sort the waste instead of dumping it all into a bin. Wood, drywall, metal and concrete can be recycled. You save on dumping fees." — **Mike**

Holmes, host of HGTV's "Holmes on Homes"

"Before adding a room, consider knocking down walls to access a room you don't use. If you have an unused dining room, for example, take down the wall between it and the kitchen instead of expanding the kitchen." — **Tom Dredge, Board Room Designs Ltd., Aurora**



"If you plan to spend more than \$20,000 or are significantly changing the value of your house, call an architect. Many of us use software to create 3-D models of the room, so you can 'walk' around the room. That helps you plan ahead so you don't make changes later that will cost money." — **Lisa Elkins, 2 Point Perspective Inc., Chicago**

"Many contractors will let you use their contractors' discount to buy things like tile and bathroom fixtures. Because we buy a lot from the building-supply companies, they give us a lower price than they give the consumer." — **Bruce Pinsler, Galaxie Construction, Lincolnwood**

If your kitchen cabinets are in good shape but predate the Clinton administration, call a cabinet refacer to replace the doors and drawers. "You save 20 to 30 percent (compared with buying new cabinets), get the new soft-close drawers and a whole new look for your kitchen." — **Monica Butler, Granite Transformations, Vernon Hills/Tinley Park**



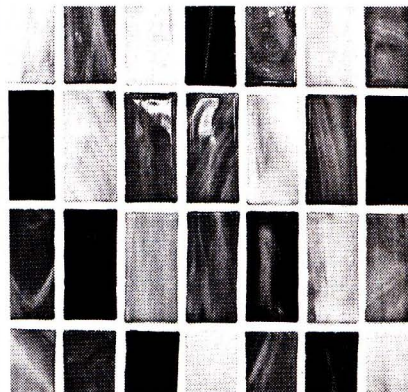
Even if you aren't handy, you can operate a broom. "Do your own (daily) cleanup and you can take 4 to 5 percent off your contractor's price." — **Daniel Rumpel, Hi-Tech Builders Inc., Chicago**

"Pick up the building products yourself, even if you have a contractor doing the work for you. Caveat: Ask your contractor what to buy so he can advise you on quality brands." — **Wayne Owczarzak, Mr. Handyman, West Chicago**

Before you replace a well-built bathroom vanity that is 30 inches tall with a new, 36-inch version, consider raising it. "A contractor can trim it out and/or give it legs for less money than it costs to get a new one. Caveat: You will probably have to move the plumbing connections." — **Jeff Hoerter, The Drudge Meister, Highland Park**

As you choose building products, consult energystar.gov to determine which ones trigger tax credits. They include windows, insulation and HVAC equipment, for example. For your tax files, save your sales receipts and obtain copies of the manufacturers' certificates. The latter takes some legwork; best to start with the manufacturers' Web sites.

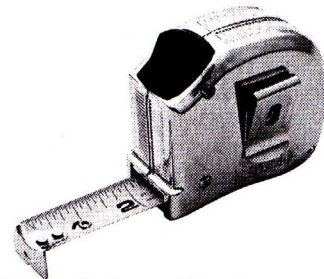
"We fix the broken tile, seal the grout and replace things like soap dishes, then use a water-resistant enamel that gives the tile a new finish. You pick the new color; so you can get rid of that 1950s pink." — **Jim Wagner, ARK Porcelain Refinishing, East Dundee**



"Before you buy an expensive new tool for your project, see if you can rent it. A miter saw that you would use to cut crown molding, for example, will cost you \$43 for 24 hours from Home Depot, as opposed to buying one for much more." — **Fatigato**

Take a class. Home Depot, for example, offers free classes in tiling, installing molding and replacing faucets. "Once a month, we have one for women only — 'Do-it-HERself.'" — **Fatigato**

"Know your limits. If you do something you're not qualified to do, then you spend more money in the long run hiring someone to redo it. The best example is replacing the bathroom fan. Not only does it involve electrical, which not every do-it-yourselfer can do, but it's heavy. I've seen them fall after not being installed correctly." — **Hoerter**



"Instead of spending money replacing your 30-inch upper kitchen cabinets with the newer 42-inch type, hire a carpenter to trim that cavity with wooden back panels and molding. The result is an open cabinet that's great for display items. Or, replace your upper cabinets with open shelving for a contemporary look at a fraction of the cost." — **Leslie Markman-Stern, Leslie M. Stern Design Ltd., Chicago**

"Consider buying some of your products from Habitat for Humanity's ReStores in Chicago Heights, Elgin and Gurnee. They have everything from tiles to appliances. This saves you money and helps a good organization." — **Ron Cowgill, D/R Services Unlimited Inc., Glenview**