

Every homeowner asks the same question before starting a renovation project: “How long is this going to take?” This is the question that every contractor hates to answer without more information.

The truth is that renovation timelines are more different than most people think, and the difference between a hopeful estimate and reality is where a lot of renovation stress comes from.

A week is all it takes to finish a bathroom update. A full house gut renovation can take anywhere from six months to a year or more. Kitchen remodel timelines vary based on project scale, contractor schedules, and permit requirements. Unexpected issues often reveal themselves once contractors open the walls.

Understanding the factors that extend renovation timelines helps you plan effectively and prevents the frustration of unrealistic expectations.

This guide gives you a realistic timeline for the most common types of renovation projects, explains the factors that affect each timeline, and gives you a useful framework for planning your own project.

What Makes a Home Renovation Take So Long?

It's helpful to know what factors affect how long any renovation takes before you look at specific project timelines. These factors are the same for all types of projects and all places, whether you are remodeling in California, Texas, or anywhere else.

Inspections and Permits

Authorities require permits and inspections for major structural, electrical, and plumbing work before crews can finish the project. The amount of time it takes to get permits varies a lot from one city to the next. Some places can process permits in just a few days. Some people have backlogs that last for weeks or even months for complicated projects.

Call your local building department to confirm permit processing times before setting an unrealistic renovation schedule.

When contractors are available and how to schedule them

Most of the time, good contractors aren't available right away. Booking elite contractors often takes months, which dictates your project's timeline before any physical work begins.

When work starts, the order and timing of subcontractors by contractors also affect the timeline for renovations. A general contractor needs to make sure that electricians, plumbers, tile setters, and painters are all available at the right time during the project. If one trade is late, the others will be late too.

Scope Creep and Conditions That Aren't Obvious

When you open up the walls, floors, and ceilings of an older home, you almost always find problems that weren't obvious during the first inspection. Contractors must repair old wiring before starting new electrical work. Plumbers must bring non-compliant pipes up to code. You must fix rot or moisture damage behind the tile before installing the new shower. Finally, an engineer must inspect structural problems before work continues.

These discoveries are not the result of bad planning. They are a normal part of renovation work, especially in homes that are more than 30 years old. This is why experienced contractors build extra time into their schedules. People who own homes and don't build extra time into their plans are the ones who get the most upset when these discoveries take longer than expected.

Lead Times for Materials

In the past few years, it has been harder to predict how building materials, fixtures, and finishes will get to you. It can take eight to twelve weeks to make and deliver custom cabinets. Specialty tile may come from other countries, and the time it takes to get there can vary. Appliances, windows, and doors that are made to fit certain sizes can take weeks longer to arrive than items that are already in stock.

Making all of your finish choices and placing all of your orders before demolition starts is the best way to keep track of material lead times. Contractors who start work before materials are confirmed on order and scheduled for delivery are causing delays that could be avoided.

How Long It Takes to Do These 6 Types of Renovation Projects

Renovating the bathroom takes 3 to 8 weeks.

Because it has plumbing, electrical work, tile, fixtures, and cabinetry all in a small space, a bathroom is one of the harder rooms to remodel when you think about how big it is.

An experienced contractor can update the look of a bathroom by replacing the fixtures, vanity, toilet, and mirror without moving any plumbing or changing the layout. This can be done in one to two weeks. A bathroom remodel that keeps the same basic layout but replaces everything, including the tile, shower or tub surround, and all the fixtures, usually takes three to five weeks.

A full bathroom renovation that includes moving plumbing, adding square footage, or complicated tile work can take six to eight weeks or more, especially if it involves a custom shower enclosure or specialty tile.

If you want to change the plumbing or electrical work in your bathroom, the permit process will take longer before and during the project. Depending on where you live, it could take one to three weeks for your permit to be approved.

Kitchen Remodeling: 6 to 16 Weeks

The kitchen is usually the hardest and most time-consuming room in the house to remodel. It needs more trades than almost any other room. Major renovations involve demolition, wall removal, plumbing relocation, and electrical system upgrades

You can give your kitchen a new look by changing the cabinet fronts, countertops, and appliances without changing the structure. This can be done in three to four weeks. If you want to completely remodel your kitchen with a new layout, custom cabinets, new plumbing, and a full set of appliances, it will usually take eight to twelve weeks. Projects that are complicated and need structural changes, high-end custom cabinets, or natural stone countertops that take a long time to make can take up to sixteen weeks or more.

The most common reason for kitchen renovations to take longer than planned is the time it takes to get cabinets. After you order semi-custom cabinets, they usually take four to six weeks to get to you. It can take ten to fourteen weeks to get full custom cabinets from a local store or specialty manufacturer. The best way to manage your time during a kitchen renovation is to order cabinets as soon as possible in the planning process.

Full Room Addition: 3 to 6 Months

Adding square footage to a house is a completely different type of work than remodeling an existing space. Adding a room means doing work on the foundation, framing, roofing, exterior cladding, windows and doors, insulation, drywall, flooring, electrical work, HVAC extension, and finishing work. The permitting process is also more complicated for additions than for interior remodels.

In a cooperative climate, a simple addition of 200 to 400 square feet to one room usually takes three to four months from getting the permit to finishing the work. Complex additions with structural house connections or second-story expansions often require five to six months for completion.

The time it takes to get a permit for an addition is usually longer than for an interior remodel. Most of the time, you need structural drawings from a licensed architect or engineer. This means that you have to spend more time designing and reviewing before you can even send in your permit application.

Full House Renovation: 4 to 12 Months

Renovating an entire house at once is the hardest type of residential renovation to plan and takes the longest amount of time. The schedule is based on the size of the project, the state of the current building, and the level of finish.

A full renovation of a 2,000-square-foot house that includes updating the kitchens, bathrooms, floors, electrical, and HVAC systems without changing the structure usually takes four to six months. A gut renovation that takes the house down to the studs, replaces all the systems, and rebuilds the inside from scratch can take eight to twelve months. High-end custom finishes, complicated architectural details, and a lot of millwork can make luxury renovations take more than a year on bigger homes.

Both the homeowner and the contractor have to deal with more problems when they live in the house while it is being renovated. Most contractors like to work in empty spaces because they can plan their work and keep the site organized without having to work around people. Discuss honestly with your contractor how your presence affects their daily work schedule and sequencing.

Finishing or remodeling a basement takes 4 to 8 weeks.

Finishing an unfinished basement, framing walls, adding insulation, installing drywall, flooring, electrical work, and possibly a bathroom is a project that isn't too hard and usually takes four to six weeks for a simple space. It takes two to three more weeks to add a full bathroom to the basement, and you need permits for the plumbing work.

Before finishing work can start on a basement renovation, waterproofing remediation must be done. This adds a lot of time and money before the visible renovation work starts. Before putting in any finished surfaces, you must deal with any moisture problems in the basement. In a few years, a beautifully finished basement built over a moisture problem that hasn't been fixed will need to be torn down and fixed.

2 to 8 Weeks for Exterior Renovation

The scope and timeline of exterior renovations like replacing siding, windows, doors, roofs, and decks can be very different.

It usually takes one to three days to put a new roof on a typical house, but it can take a few weeks to find a good roofing contractor. It takes two to four weeks to replace all of the siding, depending on how big the house is and what kind of siding it is. For standard units, it usually takes one to three days to replace a window or door. Custom windows take longer to make, so they add lead time.

Deck building is one of the outdoor projects that takes the most time. You can frame and finish a simple ground-level deck in one to two weeks. It can take four to six weeks to build a big multi-level deck with built-in features, custom railings, and complicated structural needs.

A timeline and checklist for home renovations

A realistic timeline for a renovation includes more than just the construction work. This list goes over everything from the first steps of planning to the end of the project.

1: Planning and Design (4 to 12 weeks)

- Set the project's goals and priorities
- Look into contractors and talk to them
- Get design drawings if you need them
- Choose everything for the finish, like the tile, fixtures, cabinets, flooring, and appliances.
- Order things that take a long time to get here

2: Getting permission (2 to 8 weeks)

- Send in permit applications with the drawings that are needed.
- Answer any comments from the building department on your review.
- Get permission before you start working.

3: Setting up the contractor's schedule and getting them to work (2 to 6 weeks)

- Confirm the start date for the contractor
- If necessary, make arrangements for temporary housing
- Get the space ready and protect areas that aren't being worked on.

4: Building (the length of this phase depends on the type of project; see the timelines above)

- Taking down
- Rough and structural work on machines
- Checkups at the right times
- Insulation, drywall, and sheathing
- Finish work includes flooring, tile, cabinets, and fixtures.
- Final check and, if necessary, a certificate of occupancy

5: Punch List and Finish (1 to 2 weeks)

- Go over the work that has been done with the contractor.
- Make a note of anything that needs to be fixed.
- The contractor finishes the punch list items.
- Final payment and project completion

Total renovation timelines typically exceed the construction phase because they include planning, design, and moving back in.

How to Fix Up Your Own House: Does It Save Time?

The obvious assumption is that doing the work yourself will speed up the project because it avoids delays in scheduling contractors. In real life, the connection between DIY renovation and the timeline is more complicated.

You can do DIY renovations for cosmetic and finishing work like painting, putting in flooring, tile work, cabinets, and other tasks that don't require a licensed tradesperson. You can really do these things on your own time without having to wait for a contractor to be free.

Local laws require licensed contractors and official inspections for structural, electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems.

The most important problem with doing renovations yourself is the skill gap. A professional can do a job in a day, but a first-time DIYer might need a weekend and some extra time to fix mistakes. Mistakes in complex technical work often cost more in time and materials than hiring a professional.

For more detailed guidance on planning and managing home renovation projects, the [home improvement section at Home Narratives](#) covers project-specific advice across every major renovation type.

The [National Association of the Remodeling Industry](#) provides homeowner resources on finding qualified contractors, understanding renovation contracts, and managing projects from planning through completion.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does it take to fix up a small house?

For a small house renovation of 800 to 1,200 square feet that includes kitchens, bathrooms, and flooring throughout, construction usually takes three to five months. The whole project, including planning and getting permits, takes five to seven months. The size of the house affects how much work needs to be done, but not always how hard it is. For example, a small house with high-end finishes or big structural changes can take as long as a bigger house with easier tasks.

How long does it take to fix up a house with 2,000 square feet?

It usually takes five to eight months to fully remodel a 2,000 square foot house, including all of its major systems and finish surfaces. A gut renovation of the same size takes eight to twelve months. The whole project, from planning and design to getting the necessary permits, usually takes ten to sixteen months.

How long does it take to fix up a house in Texas and California?

Contractors in Texas cities like Austin and Dallas have to wait a long time to schedule work because there is so much construction going on.

How long does it take to fix up a house on a show like Fixer Upper?

For the sake of TV, renovation shows make the time it takes to do real renovations much shorter. Production teams manage contractor schedules and design phases well in advance of the final broadcast. Using TV renovation timelines as a guide for real-life projects sets expectations that are too high.

What is a realistic template for a home renovation timeline?

It takes four to eight weeks to plan a kitchen or bathroom remodel and two to four weeks to get the necessary permits. Four to seven months passed between the first planning meeting and the move-in. The planning and permitting phases stay about the same length, but the construction phase gets longer when the whole house is being renovated.

Booking elite contractors often takes months, which dictates your project's timeline before any physical work begins.

What kind of renovation do you want to do, and what part of the timeline are you most unsure about? That question is almost always the best way to start a real conversation with a contractor.