

# 10 Remodeling Tips to Improve the Value of Your Home

*In the days of an uncertain stock market and job insecurity, there's no place like home sweet home. Even though the housing bubble burst over the course of 2007 and 2008, according to MSN Money, homeowners in many areas of the United States can still recoup 80 to 90 percent of the money spent on home improvements. The key to adding value is to focus on the things that are important to buyers, and to not over improve. You don't want to have the most expensive house on the block. Here, in no particular order, are some tips for how to get the best bang for your buck on your home renovations, even in a tight real estate market.*

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## 1: More Space and Light

In real estate, dark and cramped are no good, so a little light goes a long way. If your house has small rooms that block the flow of natural light, you may want to consider knocking down some walls and opening up your floor plan. Open floor plans usually involve combining your kitchen, dining and living areas into one big space that suits a casual lifestyle. This makes a small house feel light and airy. If you're not up for taking down walls, even widening doorways 6 to 12 inches will make a noticeable difference. Adding rooms is also a big value booster. Great rooms can add square footage, and vaulted ceilings will make it feel like there's even more space.

## 2: Home Office

Green is in, so many companies are looking for ways to reduce costs and minimize their carbon footprint. One way is to offer telecommuting options for employees. Millions of Americans work from home, and that number grows every year. This has made a home office more of a necessity than a luxury. Creating a dedicated work space not only adds value to your house, but it also makes your telecommute tax deductible. Converting an unused den, sunroom or extra bedroom is a great way to take care of business from the comfort of your home.

## 3: Curb Appeal

If your house doesn't look appealing from the outside, chances are a potential buyer will never make it inside. According to Bankrate.com, a good first impression can add five to 10 percent to the value of your home. If the exterior color of your house is dated or fading, painting is a good place to start your improvements. Choose colors and exterior details that match the period of your house. Shutters add charm and depth, but not if they're hanging crooked or flaking paint. Paving a driveway or walkway that is in disrepair is a must. Attractive, manicured front-yard landscaping will also add value to your home. Drought tolerant plants and easy-to-care-for perennials are a good option if you don't have a green thumb. And don't forget about your backyard.

## 4: Bathrooms

If you've ever lived in a house that doesn't have enough bathrooms, then you know firsthand how valuable these rooms are to potential buyers. Updating or adding bath rooms, especially master baths, will add considerable value to your house. A master suite with his and her sinks, spacious showers and plenty of sq. footage are what buyers are looking for. Added amenities such as heated floors, steam showers & whirlpool tubs will serve you well, and ample storage is a must. Traditional ceramic tile floors are preferred over wood or linoleum because they handle water better. Half-baths can be created out of small closets or under stairs. If you want to go green, low flow toilets and skylights are good choices. Don't be shy when it comes to spending -- the average bathroom remodel can get you back the majority of your investment.

## 5: Add a Sunroom

Sunrooms are a bridge between your home and the outdoors, and are part of today's popular "outdoor living" trend that includes outdoor kitchens, fireplaces and upscale patios. Adding a sunroom is an affordable way to increase your home's square footage. In fact, it's typically less than half the cost of adding a standard room to your home. Even better, sunrooms are very attractive to homebuyers. When adding a sunroom to your home, select a spot that's near a gathering area --the kitchen, family room, living room or dining room as sunrooms typically become preferred eating spots and overflow areas when entertaining guests.

## 6: Add a Deck

If you think adding a sunroom is a cost-effective way to increase your home's value, nailing on a deck is truly a bargain. Today's homeowners crave outdoor living space, and are looking for something a little more special than yesterday's plain planks. So if you're going to add a deck, take some time to come up with an interesting shape, and consider adding enhancements such as a built-in fire pit, benches or raised garden beds.

## 7: Paint

Painting is one of the least expensive ways to freshen and improve your home's look, and consequently its value. In the past, neutral colors were seen as the best way to create a fresh, bright, versatile look. But today, people crave color, so don't be afraid to consider a wide range of hues. Just stay away from super-bright colors, such as hot pink or neon.

## 8: Kitchen

The kitchen is known as the heart of the house for a good reason. The draw of your kitchen to party-goers has the same value to potential buyers, so a kitchen remodel is one of the best ways to add value to your house. An updated kitchen appeals to a buyer's emotions and a homeowner's wallet because, if done correctly, it can give you close to a 100 percent return on your investment. Plenty of counter and cabinet space is a must, and granite countertops are popular with buyers. Stainless-steel appliances are also a hot ticket, but the most important thing is to make sure your appliances all coordinate. A window over the kitchen sink and Island counters are also wonderful additions.

## 9: Install a Bay Window

Beautify your space by installing a bay window. There are many ways you can use this feature: create a place to enjoy breakfast by adding chairs and a side table; add a bench and comfy pillows to create a great lounging area; incorporate a bay window near your bed for a more enjoyable place to wake up and start your day with abundance of natural light!

## 10: Replace your Windows

Replacing your dated windows with energy efficient windows is a great investment. Old windows not only let in the cold air, but also allow warm air to enter, causing your heating and cooling bills to be higher than needed. Old windows are usually dull and faded, so replacing the windows also freshens up your curb appeal.

