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Turn your garage into a multi-purpose space



Remodeling a garage can add value and plenty of usable space to a home. Whether a garage houses cars or hosts neighborhood game night, a garage renovation can be well worth the investment.



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Homeowners tend to want to maximize all of the space they have in their homes. For some this may involve turning a garage from a utilitarian space into one that serves multiple purposes.

According to The Mortgage Reports, a home-buying and improvement resource, garage renovations can increase the value of a home and add living space. Garage remodels can create additional storage space, provide an area for a home gym or even create room for a home office. Prior to beginning a garage remodel, homeowners may have some common questions about the process.

How much does the renovation cost?

Several factors will ultimately determine the final price of a garage remodel, but HomeAdvisor says the national average for a garage remodel falls between \$6,000 and \$26,000. Most homeowners come in at around \$15,000 for a total garage conversion.

Will I recoup the investment?

A garage conversion adds value to a home if it creates new and usable living space. The firm Cottage, which pulled together a team of builders, architects and technologists, advises the average garage conversion provides an 80 percent return on investment. That ROI varies depending on location.

How can I upgrade the flooring?

Garages traditionally feature concrete floors. Although durable, concrete floors can feel damp, hard and cold underfoot. Both vinyl plank and epoxy flooring options can elevate the design and functionality of

the garage.

Can I have the best of both worlds?

Sometimes a garage needs to serve many purposes. Lofting the garage means a homeowner can still park cars or utilize the lower space as a living area, all the while items are stored overhead. Some flip this design scenario and have the loft area as a bedroom or finished living space, while the lower portion remains a traditional garage area. Another thought is to finish only a portion of the garage. This works well for two- or three-car garages where there will be room to park a car and the remainder will serve another purpose.

What are other ways to improve the garage?

Installing more windows or improving on the lighting in the garage can be important. Window installation enables people to circulate air in the garage without having to open the garage door. Improving the lighting means the garage can still be enjoyed or utilized after dark. Spread out lighting in the garage, and use a combination of overhead and task lighting just as one would in the home itself.

How do I deter bugs or other pests from entering?

Insects often want to hunker down in garages, and they may find it easy to get inside a garage. Keeping the garage clean and organized is the best way to deter pests and to spot infestations before they become problematic. Reducing water and humidity in the space, weatherproofing at the base of the garage door and other entry spots and utilizing insect repellents to make the garage less hospitable also can decrease the risk of insect infestation.

Remedying certain conditions can help keep pests away from your home

No homeowner wants pests to invade their homes or their yards. However, it's easy for pests to find their way into and around a home. In fact, certain conditions may be inviting pests to a property.

- **Garbage:** Piles of garbage offer food and shelter to pests. Removing garbage piles and cleaning up food waste promptly can make a difference.

- **Stagnant water:** Mosquitoes breed in standing water, which is water not affected by waves, current or a

filtration system. Anywhere water has pooled, mosquitoes may be breeding.

- **Moisture or standing water:** Additional sources of water and moisture may attract pests like gnats, mosquitoes, stink bugs, and certain spiders. Damp areas are of particular concern, especially when combined with darkness.

- **Firewood:** Firewood may attract a variety of pests, including termites and weevils. Firewood also may contain eggs that were laid

before trees were cut down. If firewood is needed, it should be stacked far away from a home.

- **Clogged gutters:** Ignoring clogged gutters can lead to pest problems. Mice, squirrels, birds, ants, and spiders may be attracted to damp leaves in clogged gutters. Leaves offer shelter, nesting material and possible food sources of insect life.

- **Dirty dishes and indoor trash:** Leaving food-covered dishes in the sink invites pests. Leftover food attracts

cockroaches, flies, ants, and more. Even if time is short, it's best to wash dishes or load them into the dishwasher. Overflowing trash also draws pests into a home.

- **Clutter:** Clutter provides hiding places for all sorts of rodents and insects, which can hide out in cluttered areas and remain comfortable. Going room to room and clearing out extraneous items may help reduce pest populations. Focus on the garage and basement, in particular.



Pests are attracted to certain conditions, and remedying these issues can help reduce pest infestations.



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A few modifications can make a home more cozy

The meaning of the term “cozy” varies as it pertains to home decor. For some, cozy may mean intimate spaces with lots of quilts and throws. For others, cozy could indicate bright and airy spaces enhanced by plenty of fresh foliage.

Regardless of how they define cozy, homeowners typically want their homes to be inviting and comfortable. With that in mind, the following are some ways to impart a cozy vibe to any living space.

- Make use of a fireplace. Flames lapping wood (or faux wood in the event of gas-powered fireplaces) can put anyone in a tranquil state of mind. Fireplaces add instant ambiance and make great places for

people to congregate and engage in conversation. During warmer months when the fire isn't blazing, decorative candles can be lit to mimic the same feel.

- Add texture in the design. Texture can be anything from a raised pattern on wallpaper to a knotty area rug to a mosaic piece of artwork. A home with texture tends to create cozier impressions than one with all sleek and smooth surfaces.

- Enjoy a soft rug. Although many design experts say hardwood floors or laminate options are easier for allergies and keeping a home clean, a soft rug underfoot can be welcoming. Rather than wall-to-wall carpeting,

place area rugs in spots that can use some cozying up, such as beneath beds and even under the dining table.

- Light candles. The warm, flickering light of candles adds cozy vibes in spades. Candles can be used throughout a home to create instant atmosphere. Exercise caution with candles and fully extinguish them before retiring for the evening.

- Update bedding for the season. Crisp cotton and linen are cozy materials when the weather is warm. But when the temperature starts to dip, flannel or jersey bedding makes a bed that much more inviting, says Real Simple.

- Invest in lots of pillows. Pillows can instantly



make a spot more cozy, whether it's the living room sofa or an outdoor lounging

nook. Look for materials that are durable for the space in which they're

being used.

- Think about warm lighting. The transition from incandescent light bulbs to halogen and LED is beneficial from an environmental standpoint. However, LEDs illuminate with a more stark, blue light that can seem clinical in home spaces. Look for bulbs where the “temperature” can be customized. The more the color spectrum leans toward warm light, the more cozy a space will feel. This can be enhanced by putting some lights on dimmer switches, and toning down the brightness as needed.

- Install a bookshelf. Even for those who are strict devotees of e-readers, a shelf full of actual books interspersed with some well-placed knick-knacks can make a room feel more cozy. Books add texture, the feel of hal-lowed halls and libraries, and visual appeal.

Making a home more cozy doesn't have to be complicated. A few easy modifications can improve interior spaces.

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The Dos and Don'ts of bathroom renovations

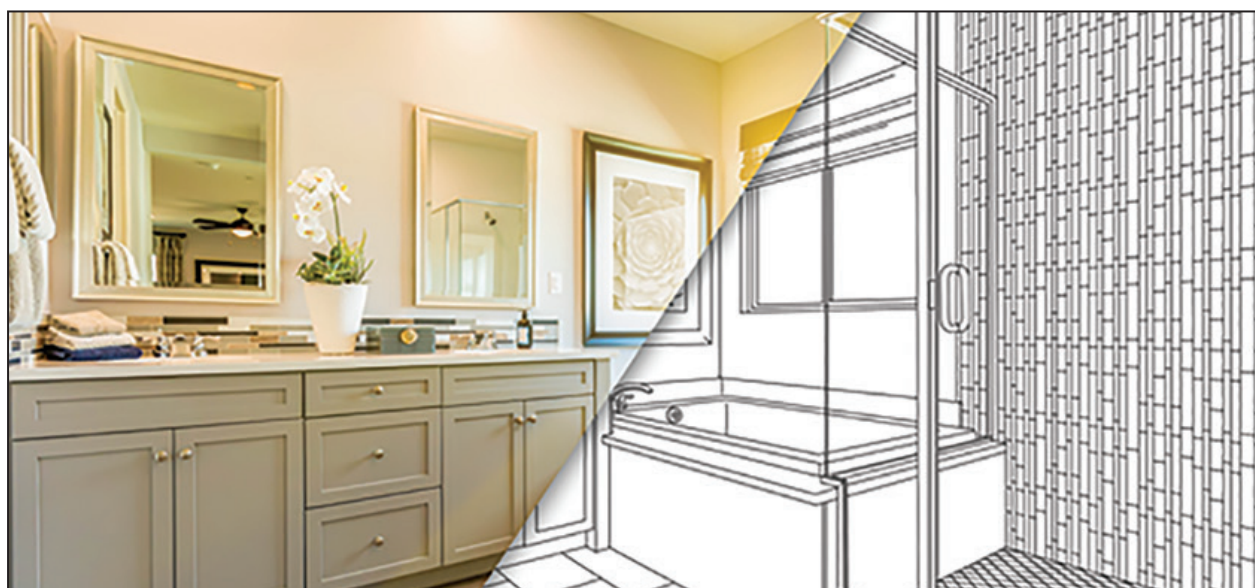
Bathroom renovations are significant undertakings that cost homeowners sizable amounts of money. According to Remodeling magazine's "2024 Cost vs. Value Report," the average cost of a mid-range bathroom remodel across the United States in 2024 is around \$25,000. Homeowners who want an upscale remodel can expect to spend around \$80,000 in 2024.

Such a large financial commitment underscores the significance that homeowners get their bathroom remodels right. Mistakes will only increase the already substantial financial commitment homeowners must make, so it can help to keep these dos and don'ts in mind.

DO work with a certified, reliable contractor. YouTube tutorials can give a false impression of renovation projects in relation to their degree of difficulty. Renovations as significant as bathroom remodeling projects require the skills and experience of professionals.

DON'T ignore return on investment (ROI). There's no denying certain projects provide a better return on investment than others. The upscale bathroom remodel with a nearly \$80,000 price tag noted above may prove awe-inspiring, but homeowners looking to get as much of their money back at resale should know that such a renovation recovers 45 percent of homeowners' initial investment. By contrast, the mid-range bathroom remodel yields a 74 percent return according to Remodeling magazine. Though ROI may not be the deciding factor for every homeowner, it definitely merits consideration when planning a project.

DO pay attention to the



details. Planning a bathroom renovation can be overwhelming, as homeowners have many decisions to make before the project even begins. For example, homeowners will have to choose a vanity, fixtures, toilet, showerhead, and an assortment of additional

features when planning the project. Contractors work with clients to show them all of their options, and some will offer advice on products or materials if asked. But homeowners are ultimately the ones who will have to live with the choices they make during the planning process, so these details merit ample

consideration and should not be treated as trivial.

DON'T emphasize cost over quality. Homeowners should do their best to estab-

lish a renovation budget and stay within that budget, but quality materials should take precedence over cost. Many budget-friendly furnishings

and accessories are durable and aesthetically appealing, so homeowners need not enter a bathroom renovation thinking high-end products are their only options. But it's important that homeowners recognize the conventional wisdom that buyers get what they pay for when it comes to home renovations. If homeowners try to cut costs on materials, they may need to update or redo the bathroom much sooner than they would if they invest in quality furnishings and accessories the first time around.

Bathroom renovations can be costly. Remembering some simple dos and don'ts can give homeowners the peace of mind that their renovation investment will result in an impressive, durable space.



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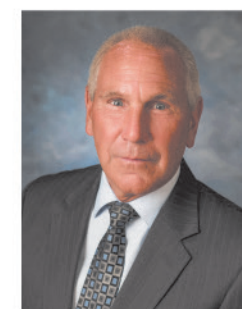
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Almost two-thirds of home fires are due to human error

(StatePoint) The threat of a home fire is greater than most people think. In fact, 40% of people believe they are more likely to win the lottery or get struck by lightning than experience a home fire, yet residential fires are the most common disaster people face in the United States, according to the American Red Cross. Here's how to help prevent fires, and how to prepare for the worst:

Be Informed: The National Fire Protection Association reports that 60% of home fires are due to human error. It's important to realize that humans are flawed. We forget things, we mess up, and we're often distracted. Accepting the fact that a house fire is a real possibility is an important step in the right direction. There are simple actions you can take to help prevent accidents. For starters, cooking is the leading cause of house fires. Never leave cooking unattended.

Keep the cooking area free of flammable items such as potholders, towels and packaging, and always maintain a 3-foot safety zone free of pets and kids.

Update Your Smoke Detection Devices: While taking safety precautions is critical, having the latest fire safety technology can provide an extra layer of detection. Pioneers in the home safety field are providing new solutions that give homeowners more control over their safety, and like many technologies, today's smoke and carbon monoxide detectors have come a long way. In fact, the new Kidde Detect devices provide over 25% faster smoke detection (29% faster average smoke detection based on internal testing of smoldering wood fires for Kidde 9th Edition vs. leading competitor 8th Edition products) that's three times more precise (in terms of consistency and range of obscuration rate, based on internal test-



ing for Kidde 9th Edition vs. leading competitor 8th Edition products). This is a critical improvement, as statistics show that people have less than 2 minutes to safely escape a house fire, so every second counts.

Tech expert Marc Saltzman explains, "This tech-

nology is revolutionary because it features enhanced sensing technology to reduce nuisance alarms."

"Nuisance alarms," also known as false alarms, refer to when smoke alarms beep but there is no threat of fire. They are often caused by cooking activities and lead

many consumers to disconnect their devices out of frustration. Upgrading your safety devices to Kidde Detect Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors means your alarms are more likely to remain installed, so both you and your home can be as safe as possible. All

Kidde Detect devices include a self-testing feature that when combined with routine manual testing and maintenance, ensures the alarm is always operating as expected (self-testing is not a substitute for a manual push test of the alarm), and the devices go above and beyond the latest UL 8th edition standards to meet 9th edition. Once you have your new detectors, be sure to install them on every level of your home, in hallways, and both inside and outside every sleeping area.

Be Prepared: A working smoke alarm can double the chance of escaping from a home fire safely, but that's just the first line of defense. It's also important to create a home fire escape plan. Kidde's fire safety toolkit is a great resource to help families prepare for a fire emergency.

While many people assume that a fire can't happen to them, the truth is that everyone makes mistakes. Having the right life-saving tools can help protect you and your family.

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Give your aging wood deck a composite makeover

(BPT) - Of the more than 60 million decks in the U.S., it is estimated that 50% are “past their useful life” and in need of repair or replacement, according to a report by the North American Decking and Railing Association (NADRA). If yours is among them, consider this. As long as your substructure is in good shape, resurfacing the walking surface with high-performance composite can be a simple way to breathe new life into your deck, requiring about the same amount of time and energy as resurfacing with wood. And, you’ll never have to stain your deck again.

Composite decking has gained popularity among today’s homeowners who relish not having to sand, stain or seal the surface every year and who appreciate the eco-friendly nature of the material, which is made from mostly

recycled and reclaimed materials. Better yet, with a little know-how and a few standard tools, even a novice DIYer can install it.

Following are a few tips for taking your existing deck from wood to “wow” by resurfacing it with high-performance, low-maintenance composite decking:

Resurfacing is different than rebuilding - Unlike building a deck from the ground up, deck resurfacing involves removing and replacing the deck boards with new materials to give it a fresh, updated look. Think of it as a facelift for your deck! Installing composite decking will also extend the life of a deck with boards that are warrantied to last anywhere from 25-50 years or more.

A firm foundation is key - Before pulling up any boards, assess your deck’s foundation to ensure it is

structurally sound. Start from the ground up by examining the footings, posts and joists. Pay close attention to the condition of the wood. Discolored or spongy wood indicates rot and should be replaced before proceeding. As long as the framing and substructure are intact, you’re good to go.

Use your resources - You don’t need to be a building expert to tackle a resurfacing project. Utilizing online design tools and cost calculators

can help you with product selection and budgeting. There are also step-by-step videos, installation guides and how-to articles available to walk you through the process.

Resurfacing an aging or decaying wood deck with new composite decking is a doable DIY project that can be completed over the course of just a weekend or two. You get a brand-new deck for a lot less money than starting from scratch, and a lot less hassle through the years.



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How to clear out home office clutter

Home offices have garnered more attention in recent years. Restrictions implemented as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic forced many professionals to start working from home, which created a greater need for home office space.

Though millions of professionals have now returned to the office full-time, millions more have continued to work from home five days a week or are now working on a hybrid schedule. As a result, home office spaces have maintained their utility even as restrictions related to the pandemic move further into the rearview mirror.

Since home office spaces remain vital for so many, it's important that these spaces are conducive to productivity. Conquering home office clutter is a step in that direction.

• Cut through the piles of paper. Home offices have a tendency to transform into paper depositories over time. Work files, notes, monthly bills, receipts, and junk mail can quickly overwhelm a home office. Professionals who spend ample time working from home can resolve to cut through the piles of paper. Use a paper shredder to discard documents with sensitive information, such as bank statements and utility bills. Signing up for e-statements can prevent the piling up of paper in the future. Invest in a small file cabinet to store important personal and professional documents.

• Discard old devices. Old devices are another space eater in many home offices. Old smartphones and laptops that users are afraid to throw out can be wiped clean and discarded in adherence with local



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laws. Contact your local government to determine how to safely discard old devices rather than simply tossing them in the trash once they've been wiped clean.

• Buy a bigger bookshelf. Home offices often double as reading rooms, which makes them vulnerable to clutter associated with leisure time as well.

Books stacked in a corner or taking up space on your desk can create a cluttered look, but also compromise your ability to concentrate. A 2011 study from researchers at Princeton University published in The Journal of Neuroscience found that clutter can make it difficult to focus on a particular task. If books are strewn about your of-

fice, purchase a bookshelf that can hold them. Once books are shelved, the less cluttered space can make it easier to concentrate.

• Go digital. If space is limited, forgo traditional file cabinets in favor of digitizing important records and documents. Scan important receipts and statements and store them on a desktop or backup hard drive so they're never out of each. This creates space and makes it easier and quicker to find important files.

Home offices can quickly become overwhelmed with clutter. Some simple strategies can help any professional transform their home offices into more organized spaces.

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