

Organizing solutions

Stretch the storage space in your closets, kitchen, bathroom and even at the office

NICOLE ANZIA

People seem to fill whatever space they have available. So whether you have a house that was built 50 years ago with little storage or one that was built five years ago with ample storage, everyone can use some tips to maximize their space.

Here are some ideas for your kitchen, closets, bathroom and office:

KITCHEN

Take apart the multi-packs of snacks, canned beverages, juice boxes and bars when you get home from the grocery store. The packaging takes up so much room in a cabinet or on a pantry or refrigerator shelf. You can save considerable space by removing the individual items and storing them more efficiently, either stacked or stored in another bin where they are easy to grab on the go. If you're buying things in bulk, such as boxes of tissues, bottled water and canned soup, don't try to store all of it in the same place. Store what you need for the next two weeks in your immediate storage space. Put the remainder in a secondary spot, such as a harder-to-reach shelf or out-of-the-way closet.

And don't let valuable vertical space in your cabinets go unused. Using a portable cabinet shelf for glasses, for instance, will double the number you can store. And instead of stacking 10 bowls, divide them up on the extra shelf to make them easier to reach and less likely to topple.

CLOSET

Use the backs of doors to increase your storage capacity by adding either hooks or an over-the-door shoe bag. Hooks can hold things like extra coats and hats, and are great for purses, backpacks and umbrellas. Over-the-door shoe bags can be used for storing things like gloves, hats and

mittens in a hall closet; socks and shoes in a bedroom closet; bottles of hair products and makeup in a bathroom; and batteries, light bulbs, tape, sunscreen and bug repellent in a utility closet or mudroom. They make it easy to see the contents of each compartment and grab what you need quickly. The back of a pantry door is perfect for a utility rack with small baskets for zip-top bags, spices and extra canned goods. In your closets, get rid of bulky plastic and wood hangers and replace them with slim velvet hangers (such as Huggable Hangers).

BATHROOM

Medicine cabinets are typically crammed with oddly shaped objects and tiny bottles that fall over every time you try to find what you need. Buy tall, narrow bins to corral loose items by category: razors in one bin, eyedrops in another, tweezers, clippers and nail files in another. You can easily remove the bin to find what you need without having everything fall off the shelves. The containers will also make it easier to clean the shelves. If your medicine cabinet is deep enough, you can use magnetic baskets on the inside of the door.

Maximize the space under the sink and inside cabinets with clear stackable boxes that can hold travel-size toiletries, first-aid supplies, extra makeup and contact lenses.

I often recommend wall-mounted racks to store clean towels so you don't have to use precious space underneath a vanity.

OFFICE

In recent years, people seem to have gravitated toward simple, table-like desks that have either a few shallow drawers or no drawers at all. Although that look can be pleasing, it raises the question of where to put supplies you use every day. If you're going for



West Elm's Linden Mid-Century Wide Storage Shelf Unit takes advantage of vertical space. Keep beautiful items or things you use often on the open shelving while stashing less attractive items behind the cupboard doors.

a minimalist look, buy furniture that can serve multiple purposes. For example, instead of buying a bookshelf, a filing cabinet and a stand for a printer, you could get all

three by buying a bookshelf with a cabinet on the bottom for storing supplies, room for a printer above the cabinet, and shelves on top for books or magazine file boxes for

papers. Another idea for supply storage is a magnetic board with containers to keep small items within reach but off your desk. *For the Washington Post*

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Smart Renovations: Finding the right professional

BY NEIL MOODY

Home renovations can be a relatively smooth and exciting process if you take the time to do it right. No renovation is the same, but there are some key steps you will want to follow every time.

Before you start, be realistic with your time frame and budget. Decide what you would like to accomplish and what you can afford to spend on the project. Ensure your budget allows for any changes or unexpected costs that may occur along the way. For example: Should you consider alternative living arrangements during construction?

Your next step is to find the right renovator for your project. The Canadian Home Builders' Association of British Columbia (CHBA BC) is a great resource for finding professional renovators in your area that can offer you a quote. Membership in the association is voluntary, but selecting a CHBABC member shows that whom you are working with has signed a code of ethics, provided references, and is an industry professional. Members also have access to innovative construction methods, technical resources and local education seminars to stay up to date on industry changes.



The Canadian Home Builders' Association of British Columbia (CHBA BC) is a great resource for finding professional renovators in your area. *GETTY IMAGES*

At all times, don't be embarrassed to ask questions. You want to work with a contractor that is upfront, reliable, and has the right staff to support your project needs. It is equally important that you are clear about your vision so that the quotes you receive will reflect what you would like to complete.

To help decide on whom to work with, ask for references or view past project photos. This information can help reduce any concerns: If your contractor tells you every project is finished on time, check

with the contractor's references.

The final step before you get started is to make sure everything is in writing. An industry professional offers a detailed project contract that covers what will be done, when, and how much it will cost. Any details you have agreed to—such as warranties, insurance, or liens—must be outlined in writing to protect yourself if there is a dispute.

Walk away if a contractor asks to be paid in cash or doesn't agree to a contract. Even if the price is

lower, a cash deal is not worth the risks. Without a contract, you are not protected and have no recourse or record of work should anything go wrong.

Finally, it may be tempting to do a renovation yourself or move quickly to save money. Yet without prior experience and training, the process is more complicated than it looks on television. Filing for permits, ensuring the project meets the building code, managing inspections, and monitoring site safety are some of the requirements of a renovation. Taking on the project as a do-it-yourself may end up costing more money than hiring a professional in the first place.

The Canadian Home Builders' Association of B.C. has shared its Get it in Writing! campaign about smart renovations for many years. It's time for you to get started on your next home renovation, big or small. Just remember to do proper research, get everything in writing, and find a professional renovator to guide you through the process.

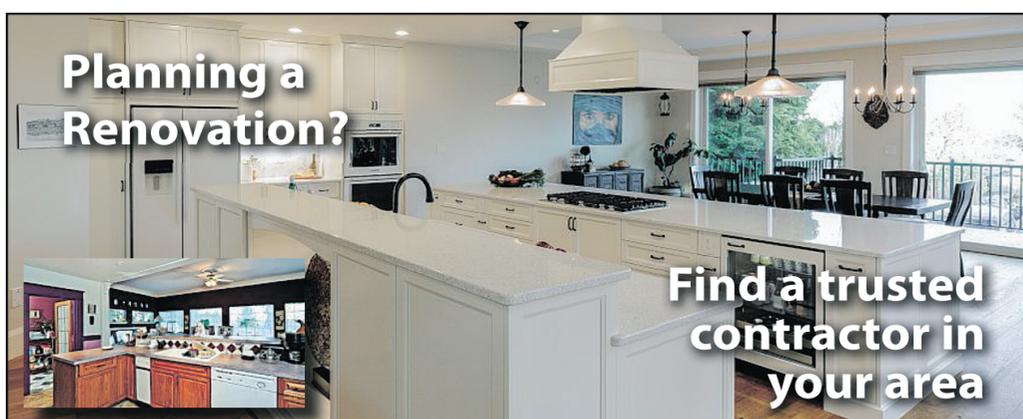
To learn more about renovations or to find a contractor, visit renomonth.ca.

Neil Moody is the CEO of the Canadian Home Builders' Association of BC.

TOP 10 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL RENOVATION

1. Plan out your vision of what you want to achieve.
2. Determine what you would like to spend, saving room for unexpected costs.
3. Receive multiple quotes from different CHBA BC members in your area.
4. Confirm your contractor carries proper insurance and is up to date with WorkSafe BC.
5. Determine what warranty you will have for the project, and for how long.
6. Ask for at least three references from your potential contractor.
7. Get everything in writing and refuse to pay in cash. A verbal assurance is not enough.
8. Verify that all of the required permits have been obtained.
9. Stay in touch with your contractor throughout the project. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
10. Pay your contractor on time. Hold back the agreed amount for builders' liens during the holdback period.

THIS STORY WAS PROVIDED BY THE CANADIAN HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION OF BC FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES.



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