



Bathroom bliss

Renovate's interior design expert Donna White takes a refreshing look at designing bathrooms.

COLUMN Donna White

Are you looking to renovate your bathroom? A redesign is not just about how it looks – although that is very important – it's about practicalities too. Remembering that a nice hot bath will just about fix anything ... read on.

The most important thing you can do prior to the start of a bathroom renovation project is to prepare. This means to know what style you want, to know how to arrange the space efficiently, to plan for good storage, to know how much you can or are willing to spend, and to use the best people to get the job done.

Firstly, understanding the style of a new bathroom you want will give you a design direction to follow. To help my interior design clients understand what style they like, I often ask them to tear out pictures from magazines. However, the resulting collection of images may need fine-tuning as you should always work with the style of home you live in.

Who uses the bathroom will also influence the style and type of items you select. Ask yourself if it will be a shared space for the family, an at home luxury spa, or simply a practical extra bathroom?

A bathroom should be efficient. So, having decided on the style you want, consider how best to arrange the physical space logically. The way to do this is to draw a simple floor plan to scale 1:20, including existing or proposed units. If you can't draw up the plans yourself, pay an architect or designer to do it. The current layout can be changed, if the scale drawing shows you a better way.

If you're planning a significant change, such as expanding the space,

or the bathroom is part of a major renovation, consulting an architect is essential. Council will require architectural plans. A professional designer can advise you on spatial issues. They can take the mystery out of colour, pattern and texture relating to floor and wall tiles, vanity, bench tops, lighting, window treatments, and storage.

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A home can never have too much storage. So, think about bathroom storage solutions for towels, grooming and cosmetic products, bathroom cleaners, hairdryers, shavers and children's bath toys. Keep clutter off the floor, because statistics show most household accidents occur in the bathroom.

Few people actually like to crunch numbers. However, establishing a budget is the only way to determine what you can afford. Plumbing, tiling and electrics all require professional expertise, and that costs money.

Once you have decided on style and budget, follow 10 steps in implementing the bathroom renovation. Step one: set realistic goals. To do this make a list of items or products you must have, then add amenities you'd like to have if the

budget will allow. Step two, source the products you need. Compare prices and features.

Step three: check out 'green' alternatives. Incorporate some earth-friendly products, such as water-conserving fixtures in the design. Step four: if you are thinking green, go a step further and consider what you have that you can reuse. Waste not ...

Step five, buy the best you can afford. Step six: use the plans and specifications for your new bathroom to get competitive quotes from several contractors. Check their credentials and follow up on their references. Step seven: get in writing the payment schedule, the specifics of the job, a start date and a timetable for completion. Step eight: expect the unexpected, so include contingency in your budget.

Step nine: obtain permits. This is a rule not to be broken. Permits and building codes exist for your safety. Ignoring them may cost you financially and personally.

And finally, step 10, make arrangements to stay elsewhere for a few days at some point during the project, especially if it is the only bathroom in the house.

My secret is to use every trick in the book – from bright lighting and large mirrors to pale reflective flooring and subtle window treatments – to improve the feeling of space in what is often the smallest room in the house. Wall mounted items are excellent for small bathrooms because you can see more of the floor, giving the impression that the room is much bigger than it actually is. ■



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