

kitchen

ultimate planning guide

**STYLE
& FUNCTION**
DESIGN A KITCHEN
THAT HAS IT ALL

EXPERT ADVICE ON
BUDGET,
PLANNING, AND
REMODELING

CHOOSE THE PERFECT
KITCHEN PRODUCTS

Need help with
your project?
Find out how
pros can help.

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kitchen

ultimate planning guide



Whether you're remodeling an existing kitchen or planning a new home, consult this handy guide to take you through the kitchen planning process.

The following pages will help you assess your current space and your everyday needs, decide what work you can do yourself and what you might need to hire out, and select the fixtures and materials that will make your kitchen an ideal gathering place. Take some time to bring your dream kitchen into focus—then let the dreaming, planning, and shopping begin!

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KITCHEN WISH LIST

Before beginning construction work, assess your needs, devise an efficient layout, and determine a budget.



DETERMINE YOUR NEEDS

What do you love about your current kitchen?

What would you most like to change?

Describe your dream kitchen:

What type of feeling would you like your new kitchen to have?

What colors do you like?

How do you describe your decorating style?

Do you want to include multiple workstations?

Do you want your kitchen to be open to the family room or other living spaces?

Number and age of household members:

Number and age of cooks:

Does anyone using the kitchen have any physical limitations? Please explain.

How many times per month do you entertain?

Do you host large events or small gatherings?

KITCHEN WISH LIST

Determine what activities you'll do in your kitchen and where you will want these activities to take place. Knowing how you'll use your kitchen will help you plan an efficient layout.

KITCHEN ACTIVITIES

Cooking

| | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Light cooking (fast meals, easy preparation) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family cooking (large meals, partially from scratch) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gourmet cooking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Baking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Entertaining (serving outside the kitchen) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cooking parties as entertaining | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Dining

| | Yes | No |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Informal dining for fewer than six | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Informal dining for six or more | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Formal dining | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other Kitchen Activities

| | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Office/computer work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Crafts | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sewing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Homework | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Games | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| TV viewing (in kitchen or from kitchen area) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Laundry: machine-wash, hand-wash, air-dry, sort/fold | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Talking on the phone | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Listening to music | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Displaying collections | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Growing herbs/plants | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

STORAGE BY ITEM TYPE

Food/Beverages

| | Yes | No |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Staples, canned goods | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fruits, vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spices, oils, vinegars | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Coffee, espresso, tea | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wine | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other: _____ | | |

Cookware

| | Yes | No |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bakeware | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pots and pans | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Measuring cups, spoons | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Specialty utensils, such as funnels | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cookbooks, recipes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Small appliances | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other: _____ | | |

Dishes/Serving

| | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Everyday dinnerware, glassware | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Table linens, napkins | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Special-occasion dinnerware, glassware | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Flatware | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Serving pieces (platters, tureens, pitchers) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other: _____ | | |

Other

| | Yes | No |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Paper goods | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Food storage containers/wraps | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pet food and supplies | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cleaning products | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

STORAGE ACCESSORIES

Base Cabinets

| | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Full-extension sliding shelves | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hinged swing-out wire shelf units (for blind corners) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lazy Susan system (for corner cabinet) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Door-mount racks for food pantry | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Slide-out racks/bins for trash and recycling | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dedicated racks for pots and pans, with lid dividers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Controlled-close drawer systems | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Deep pegged drawers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Wall Cabinets

| | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Pull-down overhead shelf systems | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Flip-down cookbook shelf, mounted to underside | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Miscellaneous

| | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Backsplash rack system for utensils and spices | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ceiling-mount pot rack | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cabinet for TV | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other: _____ | | |

KITCHEN WISH LIST

Now that you have a vision for your new kitchen, consider its physical properties. Go through the checklists below and think about the things you want to change and/or include.

PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

Room Size

| | Existing Kitchen | New Kitchen |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------|
| North wall | _____ | _____ |
| East wall | _____ | _____ |
| South wall | _____ | _____ |
| West wall | _____ | _____ |
| Total square feet | _____ | _____ |
| Ceiling height | _____ | _____ |

Cabinets

Style:

- _____ Traditional
- _____ Contemporary
- _____ Transitional
- _____ Cottage
- _____ Period look (specify) _____

Door Surface

- Wood _____ Species _____ Finish _____
- Laminate or vinyl thermal overlay _____
- Metal _____

Door Style

Full overlay _____ Partial overlay _____ Inset _____

For examples of door styles, see page 12.

| | Yes | No |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Multiple surfaces | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cabinet hardware | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Island | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Matching range hood | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Matching appliance panels | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Surfaces

| | Backsplash | Countertop |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ceramic Tile | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Concrete | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Laminate | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Quartz-surfacing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Solid-surfacing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stainless steel | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stone | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wood | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other _____ | | |

Flooring

| | Yes | No | Where? |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------|
| Bamboo | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Carpet | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Ceramic tile | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Concrete | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Cork | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Laminate | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Linoleum | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Vinyl sheet | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Vinyl tile | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Wood | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Wood, engineered | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Stone | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| Other: _____ | | | |

Sink

Material:

- _____ Acrylic
- _____ Cast iron
- _____ Composite
- _____ Enameled steel
- _____ Solid-surfacing
- _____ Stainless steel
- _____ Stone

Configuration:

- _____ Single-basin
- _____ Double-basin
- _____ Triple-basin
- _____ Apron-front
- _____ Prep sink

Other: _____

Fixtures:

- _____ Single-handle faucet
- _____ Bridge faucet
- _____ High-arc faucet
- _____ Pullout faucet
- _____ Pot-filler faucet
- _____ Wall-mount faucet
- _____ Built-in water filter
- _____ Built-in soap/lotion dispenser
- _____ Food waste disposer

KITCHEN WISH LIST

PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

Ventilation & Lighting

| | Yes | No |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Chimney hood | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Custom insert | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Downdraft | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Island hood | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Microwave-hood combination | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Undercabinet hood | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pendant lights | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Recessed lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Skylight | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Task lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Accent lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Large Appliances

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| _____ Conventional oven | Qty: _____ |
| _____ Convection oven | Qty: _____ |
| _____ Microwave oven | |
| _____ Steam oven | |
| _____ Cooktop | |
| _____ Freestanding range | |
| _____ Slide-in range | |
| _____ Warming drawer | |
| _____ Refrigerator | Qty: _____ |
| _____ Freezer | Qty: _____ |
| _____ Refrigerator drawer | Qty: _____ |
| _____ Wine cooler | |
| _____ Dishwasher | Qty: _____ |
| _____ Dishwasher drawers | Qty: _____ |
| _____ Washer | |
| _____ Dryer | |
| _____ Washer-dryer combination | |

Small appliances

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| _____ Blender |
| _____ Bread machine |
| _____ Coffee grinder |
| _____ Coffeemaker |
| _____ Electric frying pan |
| _____ Electric griddle |
| _____ Electric toaster |
| _____ Electric wok |
| _____ Espresso/cappuccino machine |
| _____ Food dehydrator |
| _____ Food processor |
| _____ Hand mixer |
| _____ Ice cream/sorbet maker |
| _____ Indoor grill |
| _____ Juicer |
| _____ Pasta machine |
| _____ Popcorn popper |
| _____ Rice cooker |
| _____ Slow cooker |
| _____ Stand mixer |
| _____ Toaster |
| _____ Toaster oven |

MONEY MANAGEMENT

Budget Planning

| | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| I plan to hire a contractor for all the work. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I plan to do some of the work myself. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I plan to do the decor, paint, etc. myself. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I plan to do all the work at once. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I plan to do the work and replace items in stages. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| This is the realistic total I hope to spend: \$ _____ | | |
| This is the absolute most I can spend: \$ _____ | | |

Financing Method:

All cash/savings

Home-equity loan/line of credit

Pay cash _____%, Borrow _____%

NOTES:

DESIGNING THE SPACE

Planning an efficient layout and following recommended design guidelines can ensure you end up with a stylish kitchen that's safe, functional, and comfortable.

A good kitchen layout will make your space efficient and easier to work in. Go to BHG.com/KitchenLayouts for more tips and ideas.

FLOOR PLAN IDEAS

Use these sample floor plans to gather ideas about placement of elements. The traditional kitchen layout is based on the idea of creating a work triangle, with imaginary lines drawn between the sink, range, and refrigerator. If you'll have multiple cooks working in the kitchen, you might want to think about the room design in terms of zones or workstations devoted to specific tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, and storage.

SINGLE WALL

This space-saving plan works most efficiently when the sink is centered on the wall and flanked by the refrigerator and the cooktop or range. If possible, allow 4 feet of counter on each side of the sink to provide plenty of space for food prep and cleanup.



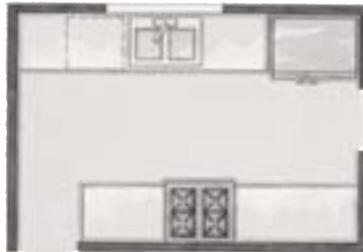
U SHAPE

This floor plan is most efficient with one workstation on each of the three walls. The primary cook can pivot from one station to another, while the second cook shares one leg of the triangle. The base of the U should be at least 8 feet long to help cooks feel comfortable.



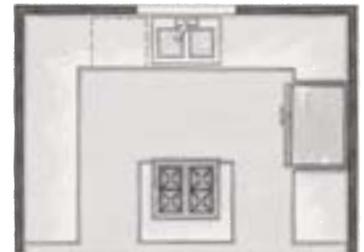
TWO-WALL GALLEY

Parallel walls contain three workstations. This compact plan lets the cook move easily between areas, but traffic will interfere unless there is at least 4 feet of space between counters. Ideally, site the sink and refrigerator on one wall and the cooktop on the other.



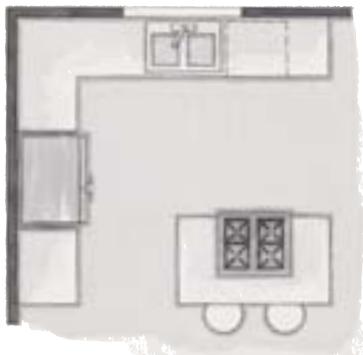
U-SHAPE WITH ISLAND

Installing a sink or cooktop in the island allows multiple cooks to work at the same time. Plan 42 inches of aisle space on all sides of the island. (In a two-cook kitchen, 48 inches is even better.) Island plans are less efficient when workstations are on opposite walls.



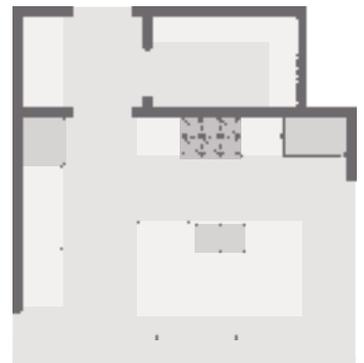
L SHAPE WITH ISLAND

With workstations on two adjacent walls, this plan adds an island. This plan works best in a 10x10-foot or larger room and makes space for a second cook; it routes traffic out of the L's crook.



MULTIPLE WORK ZONE KITCHEN

Featuring two walls and an island in the work core, this kitchen offers multiple prep areas so two cooks need not cross each other's path while they work. A butler's pantry and walk-in food pantry offer plentiful storage and additional prep and entertaining space within easy reach of the primary work zones.



DESIGNING THE SPACE

To ensure your kitchen is functional, comfortable, and safe, use these measurements and recommended clearances. Measurements are suggested minimums unless otherwise noted. The following recommendations were adapted from the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA) guidelines. Visit nkba.org for more guidelines or to find a certified kitchen designer.



1. WALKWAYS

Walkways should be 36 inches wide.

2. WORK AISLES

The width of work aisles should be at least 42 inches in a one-cook kitchen and 48 inches in kitchens designed for multiple cooks. A U-shape kitchen should include a clearance of 60 inches between opposite walls.

3. SINK

If a kitchen has one sink, locate it next to or across from the cooking surface or refrigerator. For a primary sink, provide a continuous countertop at least 36 inches wide right next to the sink. For a cleanup and prep sink, provide a 24-inch-wide landing area to one side of the sink and an 18-inch-wide landing area on the other.

4. COOKTOP

Include a 12-inch-wide landing area on one side of the cooktop and a 15-inch-wide landing area on the other. (Landing areas should be at the same height as the cooktop.) Allow 24 inches of clearance above cooktop (30 inches if there is unprotected cabinetry above it).

5. COUNTERTOPS

The standard countertop height is 36 inches; maximum is 45 inches. Allow 15 inches of space between the countertop and the bottom of upper cabinets. A total of 158 inches of countertop space is needed to accommodate landing area, prep and work area, and storage.

6. FOOD PREP AREA

Include a 36-inch-wide work surface for each cook (adjacent to a water source).

7. DISHWASHER

Locate the dishwasher no more than 36 inches from the cleanup and prep sink.

8. REFRIGERATOR

Provide a 15-inch landing area on the handle side of the refrigerator; a 15-inch landing area on both sides of a side-by-side refrigerator; a 15-inch landing area no more than 48 inches across from the front of the refrigerator; or a 15-inch landing area above or adjacent to an undercounter refrigerator.

9. MICROWAVE OVEN

The bottom of the microwave oven should be 3 inches below the principal user's shoulder but no more than 54 inches above floor. Provide a 15-inch-wide countertop space above, below, or on handle side of the microwave oven.

10. OVEN

Provide a 15-inch-wide counter space above or adjacent, or on an island or peninsula no more than 48 inches away.

11. BAR COUNTER

The height should be between 28 and 45 inches. Provide a knee space between 12 and 18 inches.

KEEP YOUR KITCHEN SAFE

Follow these design guidelines to ensure your cooking space will be accessible and safe for all users.

- Choose slip-resistant flooring, such as matte-finished wood or laminate, textured vinyl, or tile. If you use a throw rug, make sure it features a nonskid backing.
- Plan for proper lighting. Good general lighting and proper task lighting focused on work surfaces can greatly decrease the chance of injuries.
- Install wall ovens so that one rack is at the level of the adjacent countertop—reducing the need for bending. Choose a model with racks that come out automatically or pull out easily on ball-bearing extensions.
- Consider installing a dishwasher on a raised platform or purchasing a dishwasher drawer to make loading and unloading easy.
- Opt for a double-door refrigerator with a freezer below to make it easy to access both fresh and frozen foods.
- Equip base cabinets with roll-out shelves or drawers that make it easy to see all items stored there.
- Include countertop work surfaces at a variety of heights to accommodate all family members.
- Opt for single-handle faucets and cabinet knobs and pulls that are large enough to grip with your entire hand.

SETTING A BUDGET

Before you start construction work or hire any professionals, sit down and establish a budget for your home improvement project—then stick to it.

Figuring out a budget for your kitchen project might not be as much fun as selecting fixtures and paint colors, but it's just as important—if not more so. To begin, think about how long you plan to stay in your home. If you plan to move within a few years, investigate home prices in your area and be careful to keep your budget in line with the average home price. On the other hand, if you plan to remain in your home for many years, plan to spend as much as you can comfortably afford to create the kitchen of your dreams.

To determine what you are comfortable spending on your kitchen project, make a list of all your debts and figure out your monthly gross income. From here, you can determine the maximum monthly payment you can afford to spend on remodeling costs. Talk to a lender about financing options if necessary.

Remember that building and remodeling almost always end up costing more than expected. Experts recommend adding a cushion of at least 10 percent to your overall budget to account for surprises along the way.

10 WAYS TO KEEP YOUR BUDGET ON TRACK

1. HAVE FIRM GOALS AND STICK TO THEM

It can be easy to get distracted by all the glamorous products on the market, but they can quickly derail your budget. Focus on your main goals and choose products accordingly, opting for a few splurges along the way.

2. BRING IN THE PROS

Architects and designers increase initial costs, but they can save you money in the long run by helping you avoid design pitfalls and suggesting ways to save money on design and materials.

3. KEEP IT SIMPLE

If you're remodeling, try to keep load-bearing walls where they are and avoid rerouting plumbing and electrical lines. Varied rooflines, curved walls, arches, and bump-outs all enhance the character of a kitchen, but they also bump up the cost.

4. CHECK CONTRACTOR REFERENCES

If you'll be hiring a contractor to help you with construction work, be sure to ask references about the contractor's communication skills, follow-through, and adherence to deadlines. If the contractor regularly misses deadlines and communicates poorly, you'll likely end up with inflated bills and extra stress.



5. ORDER MATERIALS IN ADVANCE

Some custom items, such as windows and cabinetry, take several weeks to arrive. Keep your job's progress on track by having materials on hand before any work begins.

6. STICK WITH WHAT'S IN STOCK

Custom windows, cabinetry, and other items can drive up project costs. Look for standard and semicustom goods, which are often available in a range of styles and price levels to help keep your budget on track.

7. LOOK FOR DEALS

Shop your local home center for clearance items, end-of-season sales, discontinued products, and floor models. You can also find great deals online—just be sure you know what you're buying.

8. KEEP CHANGES TO A MINIMUM

Some changes are inevitable, but making changes to remodeling or building plans midway through the project is another quick way to ruin your budget. If you make changes after plumbing, electrical, and drywall work is done, you'll likely have to tear out finished work and start over—and pay for the work twice.

9. MAKE SMART TRADE-OFFS

If you're forced to make difficult choices to keep your budget on track, sacrifice items that can easily be retrofitted later. Choose less-expensive lights, faucets, window treatments, and door and cabinet hardware, and put your money toward cabinets, countertops, and other labor-intensive items.

10. HELP OUT WITH THE WORK

Even inexperienced do-it-yourselfers can remove old cabinets, fixtures, and other items that will be replaced. And once the major construction work is done, you can step back in and help with painting, installing faucets and lights, and other finishing details.

WHAT PROS DO YOU NEED?

Take time to consider the details of how the construction work will be handled — from what work you'll do yourself to detailed schedules relating to what will be completed when.

Can you handle the work yourself or do you need to hire professionals to help with design or installation? If you're planning a complete kitchen overhaul, you'll likely benefit from design help, even if you are willing to do the construction work yourself. To find a qualified professional, ask family and friends for references, visit a home show or neighborhood home tour, or look at the list of designers on the National Kitchen & Bath Association website: nkba.org. Here's a brief description of various professionals in the remodeling and building industry—and a look at how they can help you.

ARCHITECTS

If you're planning a major remodeling or building project, an architect can help you determine the overall design and create construction drawings that are required for obtaining building permits. Architects have formal education and experience and are licensed by the state.

DESIGNERS

These professionals can also help you create the construction drawings necessary for your project. Certified kitchen designers specialize in kitchen design and must meet specified educational requirements and follow a professional code of ethics outlined by the National Kitchen & Bath Association.



GENERAL CONTRACTOR

A contractor manages the construction work required to create your dream kitchen. They might do the work themselves or, more likely, hire subcontractors to handle part or all of the project. If you are planning a small remodeling project, you might not need professional design services and can work directly with an experienced contractor.

DESIGN-BUILD CONTRACTOR

A design-build firm can oversee both the design and construction services, thus simplifying the remodeling and building process. Some firms have architects on staff, while others use certified designers. Since a design-build firm oversees your project from initial design through completion, they can help ensure your project stays on budget.

WHAT TO ASK WHEN INTERVIEWING A PROFESSIONAL

You can significantly increase your chances of a successful building or remodeling project by carefully interviewing professionals and checking references. Here are a few questions to help you find the right person for your job.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN BUSINESS?

Look for a firm with an established business history in your area, and ask contractors for a current copy of their license and their certification of insurance.

WHAT IS THE TIME FRAME FOR STARTING THE PROJECT?

Also ask about work schedules and an estimated time frame for completing the job.

HOW IS YOUR FIRM ORGANIZED?

Find out if they have employees or hire subcontractors. Will there be a project supervisor or lead carpenter to oversee your project?

HOW MANY SIMILAR PROJECTS HAVE YOU COMPLETED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

Look for designers and/or contractors who are familiar with your desired design style and/or project type.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR BUSINESS IS REPEAT OR REFERRAL BUSINESS?

This answer can give you a helpful hint about customer satisfaction.

MAY I HAVE A LIST OF REFERENCES?

Ask for a minimum of three references, and specifically inquire about projects that are similar to your own. You can also see if the designer or contractor can arrange visits to finished job sites.

* Questions are compiled from a list provided by the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

SIGNING A CONTRACT

Whether you're hiring an architect, designer, general contractor, or subcontractors, it's best to have everyone sign on the dotted line before work begins.



DIY TIP

Planning to act as your own general contractor? Don't forget to check local building codes and acquire the necessary building permits before starting any construction work. Unsure if you need a building permit? If you're adding a new window or door, moving a sink, installing new electrical wiring, or altering the footprint of your home, you might need to obtain a permit. Check with your local permitting office to find out about codes in your area.

Need help with your kitchen remodeling projects? Go to BHG.com/KitchenPros to find professionals in your area.

EXAMINE THE CONTRACT

If you'll be hiring a contractor to help you with your kitchen project, be sure to carefully examine the contract. This is the document that outlines the scope of the project and ensures that everyone is in agreement about who will handle what. Consider having a legal professional review the document before signing it, and make sure you understand everything that is included (and excluded) from the document. Also, make sure the contract contains the following:

- The contractor's name, address, phone number, and license number (if applicable)
- Details about materials being used for the project, including size, color, model, and brand name for all products
- A clear description of what the contractor will and will not do, such as protect personal property at the job site, daily cleanup, and cleanup upon completion of the job
- Approximate start and completion dates
- The total price, payment schedule, and any cancellation penalties
- A full or limited warranty covering materials and workmanship for a minimum of one year (this should also include the name and address of the party who will honor the warranty—the contractor, distributor, or manufacturer)
- A binding arbitration clause that may allow you to resolve disputes without costly litigation if a disagreement occurs

CHANGE ORDERS

Most remodeling and building projects will require a change order at some point—a written document to alter, change, or remove items found in the original contract. You might change your mind about a specific product or design, the contractor might suggest changing some aspect of the design, or extra work might be needed to fix an unexpected discovery, such as termite damage. Make sure that any change to the contract is done in writing and signed by all parties before any work is completed. Before signing, ask about the price of the changes and the added work time they might require. Be sure to keep a copy of any change orders for your records.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING CONSTRUCTION

Here's how to handle the mess and upheaval during a kitchen project.

If you're remodeling and will be living in your house while major construction work is being done, plan for at least a few rough weeks. It's easy to get overwhelmed by all the inconvenience, dust, and noise—but you can eliminate some of the stress by planning ahead. Follow these tips to decrease the headaches and frustration that often come with a remodeling project.

PREPARE MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY

Even if you hate the way your kitchen looks now, you might be unprepared for the emotional upheaval that comes with tearing a room to the bare studs. It doesn't look pretty—and you can suddenly find yourself worried about how it's all going to come together. Take plenty of time to assess your needs and craft a design before starting construction to increase your confidence about the finished product.

TALK WITH YOUR CONTRACTOR ABOUT JOB SITE RULES

Discuss expectations about worker behavior before construction begins. For example, are you OK with smoking on the job site? Can any type of music be played, and what volume is acceptable? Will workers take off their shoes or wear protective booties over their shoes to avoid tracking in dirt and mud? How much cleanup are workers expected to do? Also ask about typical work schedules, so you'll know when to expect workers to show up at your door.

ESTABLISH A PROJECT TIMELINE AND SCHEDULE

Whether you are doing the work yourself or hiring a general contractor, outline the sequence of each step of the project and note who will be doing the work and what materials are needed. If you've figured out a plan in advance, you can ensure all products are on site when they're ready to be installed and avoid uncertainty and confusion.

TAKE STEPS TO CONTROL DUST

There's virtually no way to eliminate dust at a construction site, but you can successfully minimize it. Seal off work areas with plastic sheeting and set up an entrance for workers so they don't have to disturb the hanging plastic or tramp through the rest of the house. During the remodeling project, plan to clean the rest of your house frequently—construction dust is fine and can find a way through even the best protection. Also consider getting your home's ductwork cleaned after construction is done.

KEEP KIDS SAFE

Power tools, stacks of lumber, and exposed electrical wires all pose serious dangers for children. Ask workers to put tools away and plan to shut and/or lock doors when possible. Extra trips to the park, library, or Grandma's house can also help keep kids out of harm's way.



DESIGN A TEMPORARY KITCHEN

Plan to move the refrigerator, microwave, coffeemaker, and a few other often-used appliances into another room. And don't forget to consider how you'll clean up after your meals. If washing dishes in the bathroom sounds unappealing, you might want to stock up on paper plates and utensils.

SET UP A COMMUNICATION CENTER

Put up a message board at the job site, where you and your contractor can leave questions and comments about the day's work. Also establish a consistent day and time for project meetings with your team to discuss work progress, schedules, and any unexpected discoveries.

PROTECT VALUABLES

Hopefully you trust the workers you decide to hire, but keep in mind that all the hammering and demolition work can cause what feels like a minor earthquake in your house. If you have prized collections or delicate objects in your kitchen or an adjacent room, it's best to pack them away until construction work is done.

CREATE STORAGE SPACE FOR CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

Whether you're acting as your own general contractor or you have hired someone else to handle this task, you can avoid project delays by ordering materials in advance. But you'll need a place to store the lumber and materials, so choose a safe place and clean out the area in advance.

THE FINISH LINE

Before making your final payment, plan to walk through your finished kitchen with your contractor, architect, or designer and discuss anything that still needs to be changed or completed. Often firms will use a punch list, which is a written document that lists all the corrections or changes that must be completed to the homeowner's satisfaction. Once you agree that these items have been completed, your final payment will be due.

CHOOSING PRODUCTS

CABINETRY OPTIONS

The cabinets you choose have a big impact on the style—and cost—of your finished kitchen. Here's what you need to know to find cabinetry that's right for you.

CABINET BASICS

Kitchen cabinets are available as stock, semicustom, or custom units. Your choice will impact the overall cost and options available.

STOCK: Sold ready to install at home centers and dealers or ready to assemble online, stock cabinets are standing inventory, so you can get them quickly. Your dealer might not have every unit in stock, but special orders take as little as a week. Stock cabinetry is usually available in widths up to 48 inches, in 3-inch increments. Costs are the lowest.

SEMICUSTOM: Next up in price, semicustom cabinetry is also factory-made in standard sizes, but you'll find more woods, finishes, and decorative features. Options include pantry units, sliding shelves, and drawer inserts. They generally require a longer lead time than stock cabinets.

CUSTOM: With the most options to offer, custom cabinetry is designed, built, and installed to fit your space. A professional kitchen designer will help establish an efficient layout. Exotic woods, ornate details, and period styles will add cost and delivery time but result in a one-of-a-kind kitchen.

CONSTRUCTION TYPES



FACE FRAME: In this traditional-look construction, a solid-wood frame attaches to the front of the cabinet box. Hinges, hidden or visible, attach the door to the frame. Because the frame overlaps the door opening, drawers must be slightly narrower than the cabinet box. If you would like to add decorative accessories, such as corbels and fluted stiles, this option is a good choice.



FRAMELESS: This more contemporary-look construction features doors that attach directly to the cabinet boxes. These cabinets eliminate space-stealing frames and offer slightly more capacity. Door hinges mount inside the cabinet, so they're hidden when doors are closed. If you want to maximize storage space, this option is for you.

STYLE DETAILS

The door style and material you choose for your cabinetry greatly impacts the overall look of your kitchen. Slab doors are flat and sleek—ideal for a contemporary space. Paneled doors range from simple mitered squares to gentle arches or fancier cathedral tops and can complement a range of decorating styles.

NATURAL WOOD offers a selection of colors and grains. Oak, pine, and hickory boast prominent grain patterns and suit traditional or country styles. Maple, cherry, and mahogany look classic or contemporary, depending on the finish. Stain affects wood color and shows its grain, while painted finishes create a solid finish that hides grain.

LAMINATE, MELAMINE (a durable plastic), or heat-set vinyl (called thermofoil) wipe clean easily and resist chipping. They are often used on more contemporary cabinetry.

DOOR AND DRAWER DESIGNS



FULL OVERLAY
Doors cover the face frame—or the entire box front on frameless cabinets—leaving minimal space between doors and drawers.



PARTIAL OVERLAY
Doors cover the frame by about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch; the rest of the frame shows around the door. Choosing this type of door might slightly reduce your cabinetry cost; the door is smaller so less material is used.



INSET
Doors and drawer fronts install flush with the face frame. The precision of this design is most often seen in custom cabinetry.

MONEY-WISE

SAVE MORE: You can save thousands of dollars on your kitchen remodel by refacing your cabinets instead of replacing them. Order new drawer and door fronts, then add matching self-stick veneer to the face frame. This technique works especially well for partial-overlay doors, but can also be used for full-overlay and inset doors if you measure carefully.

HARDWARE OPTIONS

CABINET HARDWARE

Whether you're replacing your cabinets or keeping the old ones, new cabinet hardware can give your kitchen a whole new look. Choose knobs and pulls with brushed finishes for a traditional look or sleek, stainless steel pulls for a modern cooking zone. Consider ergonomics as well as style when selecting new hardware; pulls large enough to grasp with the whole hand are the easiest to use.

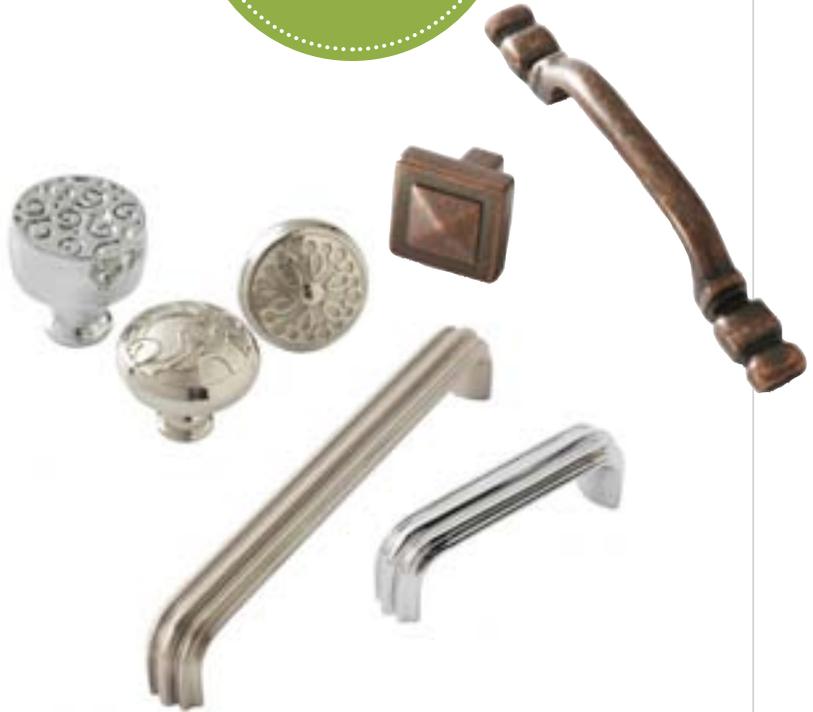
CABINET INTERIOR HARDWARE

To make the most of every inch of storage, shop interior hardware options. Store cookware on pullout shelves or wire organizers. Angled corner drawers put potentially wasted space to work. Pullout pantries and dedicated spice storage make canned and dry goods more accessible.

Instead of installing a spring-assisted retractable shelf for a stand mixer, consider opting for a dedicated counter-level storage cabinet, such as an appliance garage. The retractable shelf may not always be stable, and it takes up a lot of room in a base cabinet.

If you're not replacing your cabinetry, but want to upgrade your storage, consider retrofitted options, available at home centers.

Update your kitchen cabinets for less. At BHG.com/CabinetProjects, you'll find 30 DIY ideas and how-tos.



COOKING APPLIANCES

Modern appliances offer convenient features that help streamline cooking tasks. Here's what to look for when you shop for ranges, ovens, cooktops, range hoods, and microwave ovens.

RANGES & OVENS

Whether you opt for an all-in-one range or seek more design flexibility with built-in wall ovens, new models on the market can help you prepare food faster and customize your cooking experience.

RANGES

Most traditional ranges—with four burners and an oven below—are 30 inches wide, but 24- and 36-inch models are also available. Commercial-style models 48 or 60 inches wide accommodate six burners or a combination of burners and a griddle or grill. Some models boast two ovens or a built-in warming drawer. Bakers often prefer the even heat of electricity, which has led to the introduction of dual-fuel models that pair an electric oven with gas burners. Ranges can be freestanding (with finished side panels) or made to slide between cabinets. Typically, purchasing a range will be less expensive than buying a separate cooktop and oven; a range with multiple features, such as a convection oven and a cooktop with a griddle, also help maximize space in small kitchens.

OVENS

Built into a wall or under a counter, 30- or 36-inch-wide ovens offer thermal or convection (or combination) cooking in single or double cavities. When installed at waist or eye level, a wall oven can eliminate bending and ensure comfort for all cooks. Convection models use a fan to circulate air for more even baking and shorter cooking times. Built-in speed-cook ovens typically combine thermal, convection, and microwave functions for added convenience—but usually come with a higher price tag. Some ovens combine steam and convection; steam helps food stay moist and preserves valuable nutrients. If you often cook meals for large gatherings, choose an oven with a large capacity, or opt for two ovens.

CONVENIENT COOKING FEATURES

CONTROL LOCKOUT

This feature is a good option if you have small children in the house. It lets you disable the oven controls for greater safety.

DUAL OVENS

A range with more than one oven provides greater cooking flexibility. Many pro-style ranges offer multiple ovens; some more affordable 30-inch models do too.

MULTIPLE OVEN-RACK POSITIONS

Models with five or more oven-rack positions give you maximum flexibility, allowing you to adjust for the size of the food and the distance from the broiler element or flame.

SELF-CLEANING CYCLE

High heat burns off spills in the oven, so cleaning the oven isn't such a big chore.

TRIVECTION

These ovens pair thermal, convection, and microwave technologies for fast cooking.

WARMING DRAWER

With this feature, you can easily keep plates and food warm until everyone arrives home.



PLANNING TIP

The backsplash behind your range or cooktop should stand up to grease splatters and serve as an eye-catching focal point. Tile, beaded board, stone, solid-surfacing, and concrete are all functional and stylish options.

COOKTOPS

Choose from multiple fuel types and a variety of high-tech features to find a cooktop that complements your cooking style.

HEAT TYPE

1. ELECTRIC

Most electric cooktops are smooth-top models; their smooth surface makes it easy to wipe up spills, although they do require a special cleaner. Electric cooktops now offer rapid-cycle elements that fine-tune the heat setting as precisely as gas. For maximum cooking flexibility, look for models with expandable elements that feature a small, low-power element within a larger, high-power element or bridge elements that accommodate oversize cookware or a griddle. To enhance safety, opt for models with indicator lights that tell you which burners are turned on.

2. GAS

Traditionally, gas cooktops have been the choice of serious cooks, thanks to their fast heat and instant control. To ease cleaning tasks, opt for sealed burners which prevent liquid and food debris from getting below the cooktop. Continuous grates make it easy to slide pots from one burner to another. Pilotless ignition is standard, and some cooktops also offer reigniting burners, which automatically relight if the flame goes out. For greater cooking flexibility, look for models that contain burners with various Btu levels; these more expensive models make it easier to sear foods and simmer delicate sauces.

3. INDUCTION

These cooktops generate a magnetic field that heats the pan, but not the cooktop surface—making them a practical choice for families with small children. These cooktops are more expensive than many gas or electric options, but the elements heat up quickly and are very energy-efficient. With a smooth ceramic glass top, they're also easy to clean. They require magnetic cookware. (If a magnet sticks to the bottom of a pan, it will work.)

PLANNING TIP

Gain more cooking flexibility with modular cooktops. These systems can accommodate electric or gas heat and allow you to customize your setup for the way you usually cook. You can choose to incorporate burners, grills, griddles, woks, steamers, and more.



CHOOSING PRODUCTS

RANGE HOODS

Before purchasing a new ventilation system, make sure it matches or exceeds your cooktop's requirements. Look for a quiet model that complements your cooking and design style.

DESIGN OPTIONS

1. UNDERCABINET

These hoods work well with ranges or cooktops that produce few Btus. They mount to the wall or to the bottom of a wall cabinet, through which ductwork can be routed outside.

2. CHIMNEY HOODS

These models work where there are no cabinets. They mount with a decorative cover that hides the ductwork, offering a stylish focal point in a kitchen.

3. ISLAND HOODS

These models are mounted to the ceiling and vented through ductwork above. An island hood should be wider than the cooktop—ideally by 3 inches on both sides.

4. CUSTOM INSERTS

A custom insert offers unlimited design choices. The guts of the ventilation are hidden in a surround, so these inserts can be hidden in cabinetry that matches the rest of your kitchen.

5. DOWNDRAFTS

These ventilation fans draw out air through ductwork under the floor. Downdraft ventilation offers space efficiency and a sleek look for nonprofessional cooktops.

VENT FAN CAPACITY

Vent fan capacity is rated by how many cubic feet of air per minute (cfm) a fan removes. If you use the vent fan once or twice a day and cook on a conventional electric range, you need a fan rated at 160–200 cfm. For similar use with a conventional gas range, choose a vent fan with a capacity of 200–300 cfm. If you do lots of cooking on a professional- or semiprofessional-style gas range, you'll need as much as 1,500 cfm.

FAN SOUND LEVEL

The sound level is measured in sones. Lower numbers designate quieter units. One sone, for example, is similar to the sound of a quiet refrigerator in a quiet room. Doubling the sone rating is the same as doubling the sound level of the appliance.

HOOD WIDTH

The width of the ventilation hood should never be less than the width of the cooking surface. Downdraft models should be the same width as the cooking surface; otherwise, the ventilation hood should ideally be wider than the cooking surface to help trap more smoke, grease, and odors.



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MOUNTING HEIGHT

It's crucial that your ventilation hood be the proper distance above your cooking surface. In general, it's recommended that conventional hoods be installed 18–24 inches above the cooking surface and high-performance hoods 24–30 inches above. Always refer to the installation manual for both your hood and your cooktop or range for specific instructions.

CHOOSING PRODUCTS

MICROWAVE OVENS & WARMING DRAWERS

Cook food fast and keep it warm with these savvy cooking appliances. New models offer a variety of smart features and stylish looks.

MICROWAVE OVEN OPTIONS

COUNTERTOP

Available in a range of sizes and oven capacities, these models have features similar to a built-in model but take up space on the countertop. Many are sold with trim kits so they can also be built into cabinetry.

BUILT-IN

Designed to be surrounded by cabinetry, these units sometimes feature a drop-down door similar to traditional ovens. Often these models are installed above or below a wall oven. For a unified look, you can choose a trim kit that matches your other appliances.

OVER-THE-RANGE

These models combine a microwave oven and a ventilation fan and are installed above your range or cooktop. This arrangement might place the microwave oven too high for short cooks; reaching over a hot range or cooktop to access it raises safety concerns for all users. Although the ventilation is strong enough for many residential kitchens, it's not powerful enough for pro-style ranges and cooktops. It's used when space is at a premium.

DRAWERS

These drawer-style microwave ovens can be installed below a countertop or with a wall oven. They're ideal for kitchens with limited counter space or for island configurations. They slide open just like a drawer and can be placed at a height that's convenient for all family members. They are pricier than countertop models and have more limited installation options.

CONVENIENCE FEATURES

- **Speed cook and/or convection models** that cook food fast and evenly. They can operate like a second oven since you can use them for baking and browning, but they also come with a higher price tag.
- **Programmed settings** for items such as popcorn, pizza, and baked potatoes
- **Sensors** that turn the oven off automatically when the food is done
- **Easy-to-clean features**, such as a removable turntable, nonstick interior, and grease filters
- **Warming lamp** to help keep food warm after it's cooked



WARMING DRAWERS

Some ranges include warming drawers, but you can also purchase warming drawers separately and install them within cabinetry near your range or wall oven. Look for options such as adjustable humidity levels that can keep food from drying out, concealed controls that provide a seamless look, and stainless-steel interiors for easy cleanup. Some models offer additional features, such as bread proofing functions, or even slow-cook functionality.

CHOOSING PRODUCTS

REFRIGERATORS

Thanks to the variety of design styles and storage options available, it's easy to find a model that matches the way you work in the kitchen.



REFRIGERATORS

Today's refrigerators are designed to maximize organization and connectivity. Models with LCD screens and apps on the front, for example, allow you to listen to music, check the weather, update grocery lists, or find out the latest news. Fingerprint-resistant door finishes can help ease cleaning chores. Inside the refrigerator, flexible storage options can help make your life easier. Look for removable condiment caddies, customizable dividers, and adjustable door bins and shelves. Some models include features to help moderate temperature and humidity to keep food fresh longer. Thanks to more efficient compressors and better insulation, new refrigerators are more energy efficient than older models.

Refrigerators are available as either freestanding, counter-depth, or built-in units. Here's what you need to know when shopping:

FREESTANDING

Standard refrigerators measure 27–32 inches deep, so they stand out from standard 24-inch-deep base cabinets. They're available in four configurations: top-freezer, bottom-freezer, side-by-side, or French-door. They're less expensive than built-in models and offer the most usable storage space, but they make it more difficult to achieve a custom, built-in look.

COUNTER-DEPTH

Get the upscale look of a built-in for less money with a counter-depth refrigerator. These models extend just a little past surrounding countertops to allow space for the doors to swing open. Most are side-by-side models, but bottom-freezers and double-door models are also available.

CONFIGURATIONS

TOP-MOUNT FREEZER

A budget-friendly option, this configuration places the frozen food compartment at eye level and the fresh food compartment below.

BOTTOM-MOUNT

This configuration places the freezer below the fresh food compartment, so the more often-accessed fresh food compartment is at a user-friendly height.

SIDE-BY-SIDE

These units are split vertically, with frozen food on the left and fresh food on the right. When open, the slender doors occupy less floor space but can block countertop access on both sides. Narrow compartments make bulky items difficult to store.

DOUBLE-DOOR

These armoire-style models store fresh food behind twin doors at eye level and frozen food in a drawer below. Pullout baskets in the freezer compartment enhance convenience, and wider door openings make it easier to store bulky items.

UNDERCOUNTER

These refrigerators slide under the countertop (most at counter depth) and are ideal for storing snacks and beverages outside the main work triangle or produce near the prep sink. High-end wine refrigerators offer multitemperature storage zones and pullout shelves tilted to help keep corks moist.

DRAWER

Refrigerator and freezer drawers install under a counter, in a wall, or in an island. They're ideal for storing fresh produce near the prep sink or afternoon snacks for kids.

BUILT-IN

More expensive than freestanding units, these 24-inch-deep models fit flush with cabinets and can match surrounding cabinetry when outfitted with custom front panels. They're generally available in bottom-freezer and side-by-side configurations. Full-size all-freezer and all-refrigerator units are another built-in variation for a custom kitchen. Because built-ins are wide but relatively shallow, they're not the most space-efficient option.

DISHWASHERS

With smart features and streamlined looks, today's dishwashers ensure your kitchen clean-up zone is stylish and practical. Here's what to look for when you're shopping for a new model.

DISHWASHERS

Most dishwashers fit into a 24-inch-wide space under the kitchen countertop, but the interior options can vary greatly by price. Budget-priced models clean dishes well but offer fewer options, such as flexible loading features, and tend to be noisier than upscale models. New dishwashers use less water and energy and many include a range of special wash features to allow you to customize your settings for specific needs. The three basic settings—light, normal, and heavy (pots and pans)—should be enough for most chores, however. To minimize noise, look for models with extra insulation, cushioned tubs, and special motors that keep water and mechanical noise to a minimum. Cabinet panels (available as kits from most dishwasher manufacturers) can disguise the dishwasher and provide a seamless look. Consider whether you want electronic controls integrated into the top edge of the door to further streamline the look, or front-facing control panels that allow you to see that the machine is running and where it is in the cycle.

Dishwasher drawers offer an alternative to traditional dishwashers. Typically, these feature two stacked drawers that can be used together or individually. Their pull-out drawers make loading and unloading easy, and they efficiently handle small loads. They can be a good choice for small households, or as an extra dishwasher for larger households. They are typically more expensive than standard-size dishwashers.



CONVENIENCE FEATURES

- **Adjustable racks and fold-down tines** let you configure the interior for specific items. Cutlery baskets and racks help keep silverware from nesting, allowing thorough cleaning and preventing damage.
- **A built-in disposer** breaks up and traps large food particles to keep water clean and eliminates the need to prerinse. Some models have a filter without a grinder—a quieter option but one that requires periodic cleaning (usually every few weeks).
- **Delayed start** lets you wash when it's most convenient.
- **Electronic countdown displays** let you know how much time is left in the wash cycle.
- **Electronic touch pads** are easy to clean. Some are hidden along the top of the door for a seamless look.
- **Internal water heaters** boost the water temperature to 140 degrees F or higher, so you can leave your whole house water heater set at 120 degrees F.
- **No-heat drying** saves energy. But keep in mind that it also takes a bit longer to dry dishes.
- **A rinse/hold cycle** lets you rinse dirty dishes before you're ready to start a full cycle—reducing odors and preventing soil from setting while you accumulate enough dishes for a full load.
- **Sensors** detect the amount of soil in the water and adjust water-use and cycle length time accordingly.
- **Stainless-steel interiors** look stylish and don't discolor the way plastic ones can.



PLANNING TIP

- Be sure to physically separate the dishwasher and refrigerator. The dishwasher produces heat and will increase the energy consumption of your refrigerator.

CHOOSING PRODUCTS

SINK STYLES

Today's sinks make it easy to create a hardworking and stylish cleanup area. Pick a model that fits your work style and kitchen design preferences.

SINK MATERIALS

NATURAL STONE: Acrylic, composite, and solid-surfacing have molded-through color hides chips and scratches. The synthetic material offers a stone look that's lightweight and easier to install.

ENAMELED STEEL OR CAST IRON: Enameled steel might chip; enameled cast iron is heavy but more durable. Both come in many colors.

STAINLESS STEEL: This popular material teams well with stainless steel appliances. Be sure to check the gauge: The lower the gauge, the thicker the metal—and the more durable and quieter the sink when pots clang against it. Brushed and satin stainless steel hides scratches, water spots, and fingerprints.

STONE: Heavy slate, soapstone, granite, and concrete offer organic chic but are costly to buy and install. The surface is unforgiving of dropped plates and glasses.

SINK CONFIGURATIONS

STANDARD: This 33×22-inch format contains two bowls of equal or nearly equal size. Optional extra deep bowls (10-14 inches) accommodate tall pots and pans.

LARGE SINGLE-BOWL: Typically 25×22 inches, this type uses less counter space but still welcomes large pans. Farm, or apron-front sinks, are a stylish version, but keep in mind that most of these require special base cabinets and professional installation.

THREE-BOWL: With extra options in depth and proportion, this sink style has a third, shallow bowl for food prep.

MODULAR: Designed for undermount installation, this sink has individual bowls that come in several shapes and sizes. You create your ideal arrangement.

BAR: Favorites for island work centers, these secondary sinks come in geometric or free-form shapes.

CORNER: This sink's shortened L shape optimizes counter space.

PLANNING TIP

Make cleanup even easier with an undermount sink. You can just wipe messes over the edge; unlike drop-in sinks, there's no lip for debris to get caught on.



CHOOSING PRODUCTS

FAUCET TYPES

Today's faucets pair eye-catching finishes with smart function to ease prep and cleanup tasks. A range of styles ensures the faucets complement your kitchen's look.

Showing off sleek, contemporary designs or vintage elegance, faucets help set the tone of your cooking and cleanup area and can bring welcome drama to a simple sink. Popular options, such as pullout faucets, and newer technologies, such as hands-free faucets, increase convenience in busy kitchen work areas, while low-flow models conserve water. Here's a look at the various faucet styles available.

FAUCET STYLES:

1. BRIDGE FAUCET

An exposed channel links handles and spout. This type of faucet complements traditional-style kitchens.

2. COMMERCIAL-STYLE

Adapted from restaurant kitchens, this faucet type boasts a tall, flexible spray hose that reaches any sink corner.

3. GOOSENECK OR HIGH-ARC

This tall, arched spout makes it easy to fill deep pots and tall vases.

4. POT FILLER

Mounted on a wall near a range or cooktop, this faucet makes filling pots easy.

5. PULLOUT OR PULL-DOWN FAUCET

A two-piece spout functions as both a faucet and a retractable sprayer.

6. SINGLE-HOLE

Only one hole pierces the sink deck or countertop, conserving space.

7. WALL-MOUNT

Plumbed through the wall behind and above the sink, this type can look vintage or contemporary.

PLANNING TIP

For extra convenience, try a hands-free faucet. An electronic sensor turns these faucets on when you place your hands below the tap. Touch faucets are also available, which turn on and off with the light touch of a hand or arm to any part of the faucet or lever.



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CHOOSING PRODUCTS

COUNTERTOP STYLES

Choose countertops that fit the needs of your work zone and complement your decor. To enhance practicality and create a custom look, consider multiple countertop materials—one on the island and another on the perimeter.

COUNTERTOP MATERIALS

BAMBOO: This renewable grass offers an eco-friendly countertop option. Make sure it's assembled using food-safe adhesives.

BUTCHER BLOCK: Made from laminated wood, this works well for baking areas and island tops. Seal with oil to boost moisture resistance; let knife marks create a patina, or sand the surface smooth.

CONCRETE: Cast in place or installed as preformed slabs, sealed concrete resists burns, stains, and scratches but is labor-intensive to install. Customize it with tints, texture, or inset shells, glass, or other items.

GLASS: Sleek and dramatic, tempered glass comes in clear or translucent forms with a smooth or textured surface. Recycled composite glass is also an option. Glass is waterproof and heat-tolerant. Be sure to use a cutting board to avoid scratches.

GRANITE: This popular stone offers a variety of colors and patterns. Shopping at a stoneyard costs more than ordering from a sample but lets you buy the exact piece you want. Reduce cost using granite tiles or remnants instead of a single slab. Granite is durable and impervious to heat but requires professional installation and periodic sealing to repel stains.

LAMINATE: Affordable laminate comes preformed as a one-piece counter and backsplash in limited color choices. Or, if you custom-order from a home center or kitchen dealer, you'll find hundreds of colors and patterns, some that mimic stone, metal, or wood. The material is easy to install but has visible seams. Use a cutting board for slicing and trivets for hot pans.

MARBLE AND LIMESTONE: These stones are classic and luxurious, but they're softer and more porous than granite so they're more likely to scratch or stain. Marble is ideal for rolling out dough in a baking area.

QUARTZ-SURFACING: Also called engineered stone, this blend of ground quartz, resins, and pigments produces consistent stonelike patterns. It is nonporous and heat- and scratch-resistant.

SOAPSTONE: Soft and silky, soapstone chips more easily than granite but provides a classic look that complements traditional decors. Like other stones, it resists heat. Treat with mineral oil to help repel moisture.

Answer a few questions at BHG.com/CountertopGuide and we'll help you find the right countertop material for you.



SOLID-SURFACING: Look for panels and veneers made of plastic resins in many colors and patterns. The nonporous material resists stains; scratches can be sanded out. Solid-surfacing sinks create a seamless installation.

STAINLESS STEEL: Sanitary and stainproof, this surface complements a stainless-steel sink and perfects a pro-style kitchen. Steel is heatproof and waterproof, but a shiny finish can show scratches and fingerprints. Ready-made sections fit standard counter sizes; custom installations fit others.

TILE: Glazed ceramic or porcelain tiles in many shapes, colors, and sizes are water and heat-resistant. If they chip, they're easy to replace. You might need to regrout every few years.



MONEY-WISE

SAVE MORE: Add a decorative edge treatment to laminate countertops to replicate the look of stone for less. Ask your fabricator about available options.

CHOOSING PRODUCTS

FLOORING

You'll be standing a lot while working in the kitchen, so choose flooring that's comfortable as well as stylish. Many options are available in a variety of prices and looks.



PLANNING TIP

Install a band of mosaic tile around an island to create a dramatic focal point.



Get style and comfort underfoot. Find the right flooring for your kitchen at BHG.com/FloorGuide by taking our easy quiz.

FLOORING TYPES

BAMBOO: This renewable grass offers the look of wood. If you're looking for an eco-friendly option, make sure the factory finish is formaldehyde-free.

CORK: Made from the bark of cork oak trees, this eco-friendly option is quiet and soft underfoot. If it's properly sealed, it can withstand moisture.

LAMINATE: This budget-friendly flooring choice can be a convincing, easy-care substitute for wood, tile, or stone. Choose planks or tiles. It's one of the easiest flooring types to install yourself.

LINOLEUM: Made from linseed oil, cork dust, wood flour, tree resins, ground limestone, and pigments, this option is eco-friendly and soft underfoot. It's available in a variety of colors.

STONE: This natural material adds upscale charm to a but it can be slippery when wet and harder underfoot, and it often requires professional installation. A stone's porosity—the amount and size of its pores—affects its strength and stain resistance. For lower maintenance in a high-traffic kitchen, choose a hard stone with low porosity, such as granite or slate. Softer, more porous stone materials, such as marble, limestone, and travertine, require regular sealing to reduce staining and scratching.

TILE: A classic choice for kitchens, tile comes in a variety of shapes and sizes that can provide an opportunity for customization. Porcelain tiles are dense and very durable; their scratch-resistant surface withstands spills and pet accidents. Tile is harder underfoot than some other flooring types and can be slippery.

VINYL: Available in sheets, tiles, and planks, vinyl flooring shows off a variety of looks, including wood and stone, but is more affordable. It's soft underfoot, durable, and moisture-resistant. Choose vinyl with a thick urethane top coat for maximum durability.

WOOD: This flooring type offers a classic look that works in a variety of decorating styles. Solid wood is one continuous piece of wood from top to bottom so it offers a thick material for sanding and refinishing, but it's susceptible to moisture. Engineered wood has a thin top layer of hardwood secured to a sturdy plywoodlike base layer. It's less expensive than solid wood and is less likely to be affected by humidity. Some hardwood (and bamboo) planks are coated with moisture-cured urethane enhanced with aluminum oxide. This high-tech finish is both moisture- and scratch-resistant.

CHOOSING PRODUCTS

LIGHTING TYPES

A good lighting plan will ensure your kitchen is safe and inviting. Here's what you need to know when designing your kitchen and choosing lighting fixtures.

LIGHTING

The kitchen is at the center of many types of activities, so it deserves a complex lighting plan that addresses the room's various roles. Good overall lighting ensures the kitchen is a welcoming place for friends and family to gather, but you'll also want efficient light aimed at kitchen work areas.

TASK LIGHTING

Be sure to illuminate countertop areas in the primary cooking and prep space. Undercabinet lighting can be an excellent option here; many low-profile fixtures can easily be hidden from view. Affordable xenon lights are cooler than halogen bulbs and can easily be retrofitted into an existing kitchen. Choose from strips or puck lights. Track lighting and pendant lights above an island are also popular ways to add efficient task lighting at the center of the room. The basic rule for the height of a pendant light is 35–40 inches above the work surface.

AMBIENT LIGHTING

This type of lighting provides general illumination for the room and substitutes for natural lighting when it's not available. Recessed ceiling lights arranged around the room are especially useful when the kitchen is being used simultaneously by several people for different purposes such as cooking, homework, and socializing. A surface-mounted ceiling light in the center of the room can also work—or opt for a chandelier for a touch of drama. You can add a gentle glow around the perimeter of the room with cove lighting. In this scenario, rope lights are hidden behind a molding installed several inches below the ceiling.

ACCENT LIGHTING

Add a special spotlight or aim track lights so they illuminate a prized collection of dishware or a striking architectural feature.



BULB BASICS

The type of lightbulb you choose has a big impact on the overall light quality in your kitchen. Today's choices include:

INCANDESCENT

These bulbs are the least expensive lightbulbs available. They come in a wide range of shapes and are ideal for dimmer switches. A new law, which began to be phased in nationally in January 2012, requires that most bulbs be 60–70 percent more efficient than the standard incandescent bulbs that have been produced for years. New bulbs are required to produce the same amount of light output for less energy. Light output is measured in lumens; 1600 lumens is equivalent to an old 100-watt lightbulb.

FLUORESCENT

These bulbs produce soft, diffused lighting, so they are a good choice for general lighting. They last longer than incandescent bulbs and are available in a range of colors to flatter skin tones. Fluorescent bulbs contain small amounts of mercury, so they should be disposed of carefully.

COMPACT FLUORESCENT LAMPS (CFLs)

These small fluorescent bulbs offer up to eight years of life and good energy efficiency. They work in three-way and dimmer switches.

HALOGEN

These bulbs produce a brighter, whiter light than incandescent bulbs. They're long-lasting and more energy-efficient than the standard incandescent bulb.



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