

The Remodel Readiness

Homeowner Guidebook

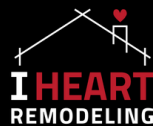
The **6 Steps** and **29 Questions** Worth Asking
Before Planning Your Remodeling Project

**BONUS: A Printable
Readiness Questionnaire!**



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Welcome

Hey there! 🙋

My name is Benzion “Ben” Shamberg, a local general contractor here in Baltimore.

After 20+ years of guiding homeowners through remodeling projects, I’ve seen how exciting the idea of a remodel can be. I’ve also seen how quickly that excitement can turn into uncertainty without the right preparation and mindset. That’s exactly why we created ***The Remodel Readiness Guidebook***.

Before you dive into design selections or construction details, the most important work happens in the early stages of a remodel. And I believe that **asking the right questions is the most valuable thing you can do**.

That’s why this guidebook is **built around 29 key questions** I believe you should ask. Each one is an invitation, not a test, and you definitely don’t need to have all the answers today.

My hope is that this guide will help you think ahead, clarify your goals, and build a strong foundation so you can move forward in your remodeling journey with confidence.

With **Heart**,

Benzion Shamberg

President & Owner — I Heart Remodeling



STEP 01

Define Your Goals

Get clear on what you actually want this project to do. The clearer your *why*, the easier every decision that follows becomes.

QUESTION 01

What do I actually want this remodel to do for me?

Start here before anything else. Are you after more function, a better feeling in the space, increased comfort, or long term value? Most projects are driven by a mix of all four, but knowing which one matters most to you will shape every decision that follows. The clearer you are on your primary motivation, the easier it is to stay focused when choices get complicated later on.

QUESTION 02

What frustrates me most about my current space?

Your pain points are your project brief. A bathroom that embarrasses you, a layout that doesn't flow, a kitchen that can't keep up with how your family actually lives. Write them down. The best remodels don't just look better, they solve real problems, and the ones that feel most successful are usually the ones where those problems were clearly identified from the start.

QUESTION 03

Why am I considering this project now?

Something prompted this. Maybe your family's needs have changed, maybe you've been putting it off for years, maybe you're finally in a position to move forward. Understanding your own timing helps clarify your urgency, your flexibility, and how ready you actually are to commit.

QUESTION 04

What would make this feel successful beyond the finished result?

The physical outcome is only part of it. Think about the process too. Do you want minimal disruption? Clear communication throughout? A contractor who feels like a partner? Knowing what a good experience looks like to you, not just a good result, sets the right expectations from day one.

QUESTION 05

What feeling do I want this space to create?

Not the style yet, just the feeling. Calm and uncluttered. Warm and welcoming. Bright and energizing. This is the emotional North Star for your project and it's worth naming before you start looking at finishes or fixtures. Everything else should serve that feeling.



STEP 02

Find Your Vision

You don't need a finished vision, just a direction. A little clarity here gets you and your contractor on the same page far faster.

QUESTION 01

What are my must-haves, my nice-to-haves, and the things I'm not sure about yet?

Being honest about all three categories is more useful than a simple wish list. Your must-haves protect what matters most when budget decisions come up. Your nice-to-haves give you room to be flexible. And naming the things you're genuinely unsure about opens up the right conversations with your contractor or designer rather than forcing premature decisions you might regret.

QUESTION 02

What styles, spaces, or images have caught my eye?

You probably already have a sense of what appeals to you, even if you haven't put it into words yet. Think about spaces you've walked into and immediately loved, photos you've saved without thinking twice, or a friend's home that just felt right. Those instincts are more useful than you might think. Even a small collection of references gives your contractor something real to work with and gets you both aligned much faster than trying to describe it from scratch.

QUESTION 03

Will I be working with a designer or architect?

A good designer can elevate a project at any scale, not just large or complex ones. They bring an eye for proportion, material, and cohesion that can turn a good result into a great one. That said, not every project requires one, and a skilled contractor can often provide meaningful design guidance or help you think through selections along the way. It's worth considering early so the right people are part of the conversation from the start.

ADDITIONAL HELP

Not sure how to pull your vision together?

That's a really common place to get stuck. You know you want something different but you can't quite articulate what, or you have a folder full of inspiration that somehow points in three different directions. That's completely normal and it's exactly the kind of thing a good conversation can help untangle.

We're happy to sit down and talk through what you're drawn to and help you start finding a direction. And if your project calls for a dedicated designer or architect, we have trusted partners we work with regularly and can point you toward the right fit for your style and scope.

Give us a call or text us at 410.559.9556. You can also reach out at iheartremodeling.com/contact. Even if you're just starting to think it through, we love these conversations.



STEP 03

Know Your Numbers

You don't need an exact figure yet - but walking in with a realistic range makes every conversation more productive.

QUESTION 01

What range am I realistically comfortable investing?

You don't need an exact number yet, but having a general range in mind before any contractor conversation begins is important. Unless budget is truly not a concern, it's usually smarter to form your scope around your budget than to build your dream scope and figure out the money later. Knowing what you're comfortable spending from the start helps a contractor guide you toward the right project rather than the most expensive one, and it protects you from falling in love with a plan that was never really on the table.

QUESTION 02

Do I have a realistic sense of what my project should cost?

There's often a gap between what homeowners expect a project to cost and what it actually costs. Doing even basic research before your first consultation, looking at typical ranges, reading about what drives costs up or down, asking for an early ballpark, saves a lot of frustration later. The more grounded your expectations going in, the more productive that first conversation will be.

QUESTION 03

How will I pay for this project?

Cash, a home equity line, or financing each come with different timelines and constraints. Knowing your funding source before contractor conversations begin puts you in a stronger position and helps a contractor understand what's actually workable for your situation. If you're planning to finance, getting pre-approved before you commit to a scope is worth doing.

QUESTION 04

What contingency am I setting aside for surprises?

A good contractor will do their best to anticipate and plan for the unexpected, but surprises can still happen once walls open up. Older plumbing, wiring, or structural conditions aren't always visible until work begins. On top of that, it's very common for homeowners to want to add or adjust things mid-project once they see it all coming together. Most experienced contractors recommend building a 10 to 15 percent contingency into your budget above your target number for exactly these reasons. Knowing ahead of time where you have flexibility, and where you don't, makes those conversations much less stressful when they come up.

ADDITIONAL HELP

Still Unsure about the numbers?

That's ok! Uncertainty at this stage is completely normal. You can spend hours researching online and still walk away with five different numbers and no real clarity.

Every project is different, every home is different, and no article can account for what's actually going on in your specific space. A quick conversation with someone who can look at your home and your goals cuts through all of that and gives you something real and concrete to plan around.

We offer free on-site consultations and are always happy to build a detailed estimate for you. Even if you're 12 months out or unsure about a remodel at all, give us a call and let's talk! It always helps to talk through the options for your unique project. Visit iheartremodeling.com/contact.



STEP 04

Know Your Timeline

A target window, even a loose one, shapes how your project gets planned and resourced from the very start.

QUESTION 01

When do I want to start, and when do I want to be finished?

Having a target window in mind, even a loose one, shapes how a project gets planned and resourced. Think about both ends: when you'd ideally like work to begin and when you'd like to be on the other side of it. That range gives your contractor the information needed to build a realistic schedule from the start.

QUESTION 02

Do I have a realistic sense of how long it will take?

Most homeowners underestimate this. A kitchen remodel rarely takes two weeks. A bathroom can take longer than expected once you factor in design, material lead times, and permitting. Getting a realistic picture of duration early, before you're emotionally committed to a start date, saves a lot of frustration.

QUESTION 03

Are there hard deadlines or life events I'm working around?

A family gathering, a new baby, a holiday, a work stretch where you can't be available. Any of these can affect when construction should and shouldn't happen in your home. Flag them early so your contractor can build a schedule that works with your life rather than against it.

QUESTION 04

Will I be reachable for decisions and check-ins?

Remodels require ongoing homeowner input, material selections, approvals, unexpected decisions that need quick answers. If you have a demanding travel schedule or a period coming up where you'll be hard to reach, that's worth factoring into the timeline conversation from the beginning.

QUESTION 05

Am I prepared for the timeline to shift?

Even well-planned projects can be affected by material availability, permit delays, weather, or what gets discovered once work begins. Custom items like cabinetry, windows, and specialty tile can have lead times of several weeks or more. Building some buffer into your expectations from the start makes the whole experience less stressful when reality doesn't match the original schedule perfectly.



STEP 05

Life During the Remodel

A little planning for daily life during construction makes the whole experience far more manageable.

QUESTION 01

Will I be staying in the home during construction?

For significant remodels this isn't always a choice. You may simply need to make other arrangements for part of the project. Think through your specific situation honestly before work begins rather than figuring it out under pressure once demo day arrives.

QUESTION 02

Do I have alternative spaces for the rooms being remodeled?

If your kitchen is out of commission, where will you cook and eat? If it's your only full bathroom, what's the plan? If it's a bedroom, where does that person sleep? Working through these questions in advance, room by room, is one of the most practical things you can do before a project starts.

QUESTION 03**How will construction affect my daily routine?**

Noise, workers in your home, limited access to key areas. Even a well-run project creates real disruption. Think about your schedule, your work situation, whether you have kids or elderly family members at home, and what adjustments you'll need to make. Having a plan for daily life during construction makes the whole experience more manageable.

QUESTION 04**Where will my furniture and belongings go?**

Items in or near the construction area need a plan before work begins. A spare room, a garage, or temporary storage are all options. Getting this sorted ahead of time means one less thing to scramble on when the crew shows up, and it protects your belongings from dust and debris throughout the project.

QUESTION 05**Any restrictions the contractor should know upfront?**

Noise restrictions in your building or neighborhood, parking limitations, pets that need to be managed, specific hours when workers can and can't be present. The earlier your contractor knows about these, the easier it is to plan around them without causing delays or friction mid-project.



STEP 06

Questions For Your Contractor

The right questions up front tell you a lot about who you're about to invite into your home.

QUESTION 01

What's your experience with projects like mine?

Ask for specifics, not just years in business. Have they done projects of similar scope, style, and complexity? Can they show you photos of past work or connect you with previous clients? A contractor who's done your type of project recently will anticipate challenges you haven't thought of yet.

QUESTION 02

Who's actually doing the work, and will you be on-site?

Some contractors do everything in-house. Others coordinate subcontractors for specific trades. Neither is inherently better, but you deserve to know who will be in your home, who is responsible for their work, and how often the person you hired will actually be present. Ask directly.

QUESTION 03

What does your process look like from start to finish?

A contractor who can walk you clearly through their process, from initial consultation through design, permitting, construction, and closeout, is a contractor who has done this enough to have a real system. Vague answers here are a yellow flag worth noting.

QUESTION 04

What does your estimate include?

Get clarity on exactly what's in the number: materials, labor, permits, disposal, and anything else. Then ask what's most likely to cause the price to shift once work begins. A transparent contractor will tell you upfront about the variables. That honesty is one of the best signals you can get that you're talking to the right person.

QUESTION 05

How are change orders handled?

Changes happen on almost every project. What matters is that the process for handling them is clear before work begins. How are they documented? How are they priced? Do you need to approve them in writing before work continues? Get this in writing before you sign anything.

QUESTION 06

What happens if something unexpected is found?

Behind walls and under floors, older homes especially can hold surprises. Ask how your contractor handles unexpected conditions, how they communicate them, how quickly, and how decisions get made about additional scope or cost. A contractor with a clear answer has been through it before and knows how to handle it well.

QUESTION 07

What does your warranty cover, and for how long?

Understand what's covered after the project is complete, both the contractor's own workmanship warranty and any manufacturer warranties on materials or fixtures. Know who to call if something needs attention after the job is done and what the process looks like.

READY WHEN YOU ARE

Moving Forward



You now have a solid understanding of the questions and considerations that set a remodel up for success. Naturally you won't have many of the answers and that's OK!

The goal of this guide was to guide you to start thinking ahead about the right areas, not to become an expert overnight. That's what we're here for :)

Here at I Heart Remodeling we are knowledgeable, we care and we love to help. If you have any questions (and we mean any) please don't hesitate to reach out.

All the best!

Benzion Shamberg & the I Heart Remodeling team

Let's Chat!

For more information, guidance or to schedule your free consultation.



Call or text us

Call or text **410.559.9556** to speak with Benzion or a member of our team.

(Whatsapp messages available)



Visit our website

Visit **iheartremodeling.com** to learn about us and to see our work.

Continue for a printable readiness questionnaire! →

Your Readiness Questionnaire

Print this page and check each item off as you go. When most of these are done, you're ready for a productive first conversation.

Step 1 - Define Your Goals

1. What do I actually want this remodel to do for me?

2. What frustrates me most about my current space?

3. Why am I considering this project now?

4. What would make this feel successful beyond the finished result?

5. What feeling do I want this space to create?

Step 2 - Find Your Vision

1. What are my must-haves, my nice-to-haves, and the things I'm not sure about yet?

Your Readiness Questionnaire

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2. What styles, spaces, or images have caught my eye?

3. Will I be working with a designer or architect?

Step 3 - Know Your numbers

1. What budget range am I realistically comfortable investing?

2. How will I pay for this project?

3. Do I have a realistic sense of what my project should cost?

4. What contingency am I setting aside for unexpected costs?

Your Readiness Questionnaire

Print this page and check each item off as you go. When most of these are done, you're ready for a productive first conversation.

Step 4 - Know Your Timeline

1. When do I want this project to start and when do I want it finished?

2. Do I have a rough sense of how long my project should take?

3. Are there hard deadlines or life events I'm working around?

4. Will I be accessible throughout the project for decisions and check-ins?

5. Am I prepared for the timeline to shift?

Step 5 - Life During the Remodel

1. Will I be staying in the home during construction?

Your Readiness Questionnaire

Print this page and check each item off as you go. When most of these are done, you're ready for a productive first conversation.

2. Do I have alternative spaces for the rooms being remodeled?

3. How will construction affect my daily routine?

4. Where will my furniture and belongings go?

5. Are there any restrictions or considerations the contractor should know about upfront?

Step 6 - Questions For Your Contractor

1. What does your experience with projects like mine look like?

2. Who is actually doing the work and will you be on-site regularly?

Your Readiness Questionnaire

Print this page and check each item off as you go. When most of these are done, you're ready for a productive first conversation.

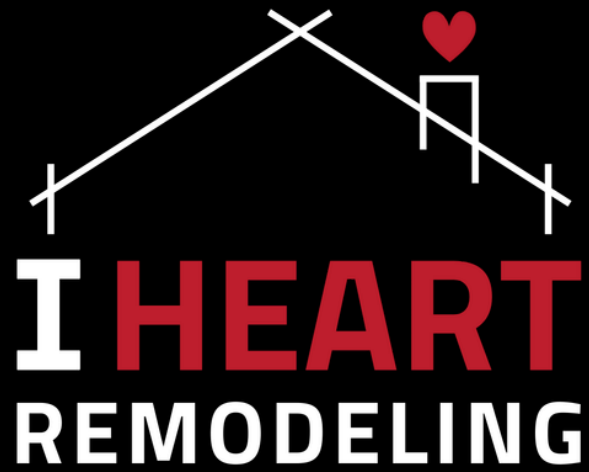
3. What does your process look like from start to finish?

4. What does your estimate include and do you offer a free consultation?

5. How are change orders handled?

6. What happens if something unexpected is found once work begins?

7. What does your warranty cover and for how long?



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