

# Kitchens traditional gathering place

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Down through the ages, kitchens have served as a traditional gathering place for families. A long-standing symbol of warmth and comfort, the kitchen continues to serve as a very important part of today's home, combining more traditional functions with newer ones.

If your kitchen is beginning to look seedy or dated, you may want to spruce it up a bit with some simple, but relatively inexpensive redecorating. You may even want to launch a full-scale renovation project if your kitchen has failed to keep up with your growing family's needs.

Before deciding on which approach you want to take, it's a good idea to study some redecorating and remodelling publications. Most convenience, grocery and book stores carry home improvement magazines. It's also a good idea to visit kitchen showrooms to see what's available. Home shows are also an excellent source of ideas.

You should also think realistically about your needs. Will a new coat of paint and some minor inexpensive changes do the trick? Or do you desperately require more cupboards and extra storage space? What about an expanded eating area? Do you

want to incorporate extra living space? Do you want to include a family room or a desk/study area into the kitchen?

## DON'T FORGET YOUR BUDGET

Cost is a key issue, so always keep a realistic budget in mind before you go too far in the planning stages. Remember that initial renovation estimates can be somewhat lower than the final cost of the project.

You can save money by doing some of the work yourself - but leave the complicated tasks to the experts.

If you're on a shoestring budget, you can still create a new look without breaking your bank account. In many cases, a coat of paint and some new wallpaper can breathe new life into a kitchen that's become drab and dated.

If you have adequate storage space, but desire an updated look, you can have your existing cupboard doors refaced or replaced. This costs less than replacing them entirely with brand new units.

New flooring can also give an older kitchen new life. Today's flooring comes in a variety of materials and textures, with something to suit every taste and budget. Easy-care wooden floors are also becoming a popular option in kitchen renovations. Before making a final choice, think carefully about how the

types of flooring you like would fit in with your kitchen. Also consider the volume of traffic the area will receive; kitchens demand flooring that is practical, durable and easy to clean.

New countertops are another option for brightening up your kitchen. Like flooring, they come in a variety of materials, textures and colors. Back splashes can also take on new life with decorative tiles. Consult the experts at your local home building centre to decide what best suits your needs.

## CONSULT EXPERTS

If you are planning more extensive renovation work, make sure you contact the appropriate experts before proceeding with your project. Major structural changes or additions are likely to require the input of experts, such as architects, building contractors, plumbers or electricians.

When redesigning your kitchen, you should also keep in mind that the installation of new plumbing is usually a complicated, relatively expensive procedure, and it might be far more economical to keep your sink and dishwasher in their present locations.

## WORKABLE SPACE

In many older homes, counter space is often sparse, so make sure you allow for enough workable space when planning any renovations.



IS YOUR BEDROOM AS COMFORTABLE and quiet as this one? If not, it can be, but it takes some planning and attention to detail.



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