

# Make a trip to the bookstore before renovating

Interest in home-improvement books reached a peak in the 1970s, said Norman Mack, a group editor at Reader's Digest General Books. Sales declined in the 1980s, but now there is a resurgence, brought on by the flagging real-estate market.

"When there is a downturn, people seem to feel a need to stay where they are," Mack said.

But first they read. Right now, bookstore shelves are full of home-repair books. Here are some of the better ones.

**The Complete Illustrated Guide to Everything Sold in Hardware Stores** (Macmillan, 1988), by Tom Philbin and Steve Etlinger, is like the Rosetta stone if the lack of an expert's vocabulary inhibits you from shopping for remodeling tools and supplies. This is a wonderfully illustrated, plainly written compendium of tools, hardware, materials and other equipment.

**The Healthy House** (Carol Communications, 1991) was written by John Bower, a builder and consultant who specializes in house construction using non-toxic materials. He lives near Bloomington, Ind., in one of his creations. His book describes building materials and construction methods that may have negative health effects and suggests safer alternatives. It includes an extensive list of suppliers, footnotes on scientific sources and a bibliography.

**Renovating Your Home for Maximum Profit** (Prima Publishing and Communications, 1989), by Dan Lieberman and Paul Hoffman, can help you formulate a renovation strategy with the goal of renting or reselling the house later at a profit. Chapters focus on determining remodeling needs, choosing materials and deciding whether to have the work done by professionals.

**The Reader's Digest Complete Do-it-Yourself Manual** (Reader's Digest Association, 1989) is the single-volume bible of home repair for amateurs. It is also used unabashedly by many professionals. More than 10.5 million copies have been printed since it was first published in 1973.

Information is conveyed not so much with text, but with concisely captioned step-by-step illustrations and photographs, some 2,250 of them. Virtually every task having to do with home repair and maintenance is demystified for the beginner.

A completely rewritten and newly illustrated version is due in September.

**The Reader's Digest Home Improvements Manual** (Reader's Digest Association, 1989) offers a thorough overview of remodeling techniques and strategies. How-to information is provided on subjects like removing walls, installing plumbing and wiring and hanging wallpaper.

Equally valuable are chapters describing options, approaches and large remodeling projects like adding a wing, expanding a room outward and converting a garage. These large projects are illustrated with detailed photos.

**The Visual Handbook of Building and Remodelling** (Rodale Press, 1990), by Charlie Wing, is not a how-to book. Rather, it is a copiously illustrated guide describing materials used in both house construction and remodeling, with specific advice on making the right choices.

For example, the chapter on roofing has illustrations of each

type of covering, including shingles, slate, tile, metal and roll roofing, individual discussions of their pros and cons, and illustrations of construction details.

**The Time-Life Books Complete Home Improvement and Renovation Manual** (Time-Life Books, 1991) was compiled from the 36 volumes of Time-Life Book's best-selling home-improvement series. The 489 pages describe and illustrate many of the same subjects, but often in more detail, than the two Reader's Digest books, and contain some material not found in those volumes. Particularly thorough are the sections on finishing

interior and exterior walls, installing ductwork, making kitchen cabinets, erecting fences and building an addition and a second-storey deck.

**Renovation: A Complete Guide** (Prentice Hall, 1991) is personally written by Michael W. Litchfield, a technical journalist and renovator and the founding editor of *Fine Homebuilding* magazine. This updated edition of his 1982 book covers all aspects of renovating and remodeling, from assessing needs to accomplishing tasks.


More than 1,000 black-and-white photographs and illustrations cover topics that generally do not appear in remodeling books.

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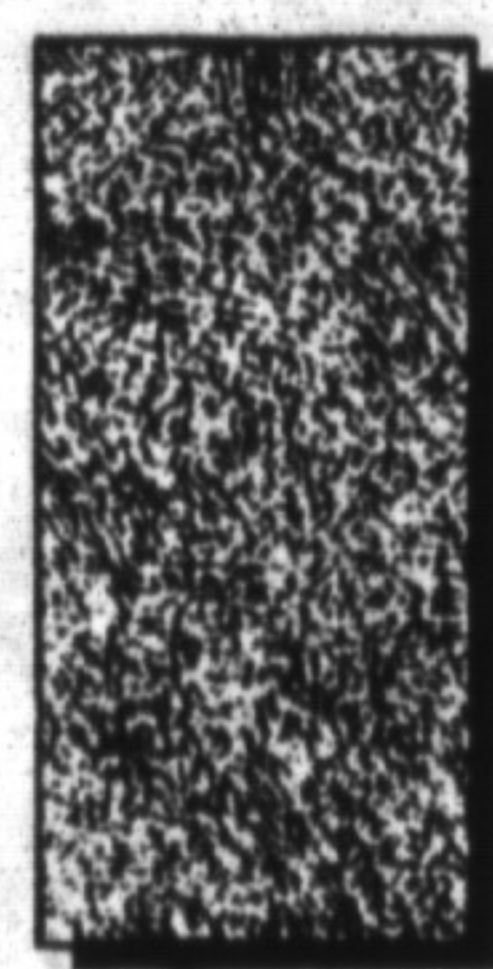
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