

Keep your reno on track

Want to pave the way for a dream renovation? Follow our seven steps to help you finish it on time and on budget

1 Organise plans and approvals

Planning is key, says Cherie Barber of Renovating For Profit (renovatingforprofit.com.au), who recommends taking the time to thoroughly consider every aspect of your project. "From the outset, be clear on your design plan, as changing your mind mid-project is when costs and time can blow out," she says. For larger jobs, it's beneficial to engage a professional architect or building designer to prepare detailed plans. "These are like a roadmap that ultimately determines what you get."

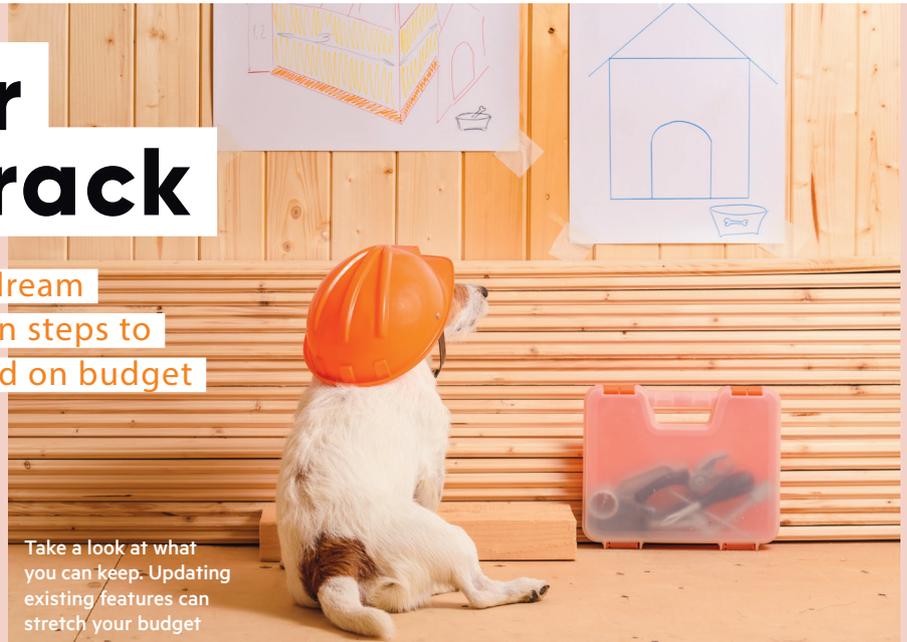
Your renovation may also require council approval, particularly if it involves structural changes, so check what the rules are in your state and lodge building plans well in advance of your desired start date.

2 Shop in advance

Select and order major fittings and fixtures like tapware, flooring, appliances, tiles and lighting in advance. "The lead time can be six weeks or longer if you're getting custom items, so organise all materials and products early so everything is on site before it's due to be installed," explains Daniella Winter of Hype Build + Design (hypebulddesign.com.au). "This prevents holding up trades and gives you time to check nothing is missing or damaged."

3 Have an action plan

Create a schedule that identifies every task involved in the project and the order it should be performed. "If you don't have professional project management software,



Take a look at what you can keep. Updating existing features can stretch your budget

you can use a simple Excel spreadsheet," suggests Cherie. "This process will help you understand the scope of the job, which tasks are intrinsically linked, and can highlight potential issues."

4 Be involved

Don't head off on your holidays during the reno. "Stay in regular communication with your trades," says Daniella. "If moving out during the build, look to rent nearby, so you can pop in and make quick decisions on site if necessary. Also set times for weekly meetings with your project manager or site supervisor to discuss any issues and check the quality and progress of work."

5 Communicate well

It's important to have a vision and the skills to communicate what you want, advises James Hardie spokesperson Deborah Hutton, who recently completed her own Hamptons-inspired renovation. "I spent a lot of time learning construction terms, which helped me understand what my trades were saying to me. However, what helped me communicate my vision was providing a file of images I had collected over time, photographs of

important details, so I felt comfortable that we were on the same page." Try apps like Instagram or Pinterest for inspiration.

6 Manage costs

Budget for unknowns. "The time and expense in dealing with unexpected asbestos or replacing faulty electrical wiring can derail a project, so include contingency of an additional 10 per cent of your total construction budget as a buffer," says Cherie.

Maria Baron of Black and White Projects (blackandwhiteprojects.com.au) also recommends looking at saving where you can. "Although you may have budgeted \$2,000 for tiles, it doesn't mean you have to max out. Try to achieve the same look for less, and use the savings to add to your buffer." Budgeting apps are also a handy tool for keeping track of quotes, invoices and to monitor your spending.

7 Hire a project manager

If you're a reno rookie, consider enlisting a professional project manager to guide you through the process. "While it's possible to coordinate some trades on your own, if you're not an owner/builder, you'll need a licensed builder to oversee some of the projects or parts of projects," explains Maria. "Someone with experience and contacts is in a better position to troubleshoot if your plumber doesn't turn up, or there's an issue with site access." ♦

"Even if you're not on the tools, it's important to be across all aspects of the project" Daniella Winter Hype Build + Design