

## **BBB Advice on Determining When to Do-It-Yourself or Hire a Professional**

Spring is the season of warmer weather, budding flowers and home improvements. Whether it's hanging new wallpaper or adding an addition to the house, many homeowners are faced with the decision to either hire a professional or do it themselves. Better Business Bureau (BBB) offers advice for determining whether a home improvement project is a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) or a get-a-professional job.

According to the 2008 RemodelEstimates.com Remodeling Sentiment Report, 87 percent of those surveyed said that cost was their biggest concern when it comes to home remodeling projects. A third of respondents said they were planning to keep costs down by not hiring a contractor at all and another 46 percent said they would cut costs by doing at least some of the work themselves.

"Although homeownership rates have stayed between 66 and 69 percent over the last 10 years, the DIY-movement has exploded in the last decade as many of the nation's 75 million homeowners have realized the amount of money that can be saved by doing home improvement projects on their own," said Steve Cox, BBB spokesperson. "While labor can easily total more than half the cost for major projects, homeowners need to balance the desire to save money with the need for a job well done."

For homeowners planning to take on major projects around the house this spring, BBB offers the following advice to help them make informed decisions on whether or not they need to enlist the help of professionals.

### **Know what you're getting into**

Cosmetic changes, such as painting or wallpaper are easy DIY projects. Structural changes, such as plumbing, wiring, or framing are typically best left to the professionals. Even moving a bathroom sink a few inches can become a huge hassle involving re-routing the plumbing, painting, caulking, and tiling. BBB recommends that DIYers do some research on the project and realistically consider what they can do well, and ask for advice from friends and family to ensure they understand the scope of the project.

### **Hiring a professional**

If the project requires specialized skills, could take an extensive amount of time or calls for additional manpower, hiring a contractor may be the best option. BBB recommends obtaining at least three detailed estimates. Homeowners should compare the estimates and negotiate on issues that are important to them because changing plans once the project is underway often involves additional expenses.

### **Divide the work**

One way homeowners can defray costs is to work with a contractor to determine what they can do on their own. Demolition work on the front end and clean-up or cosmetic work such as painting or putting up wallpaper on the back end are DIY projects that can keep costs down while the homeowner still reaps the benefit of having an expert for the "heavy lifting" that requires more skill.

### **Weigh the costs**

While hiring professionals is an added expense to any project, they often have relationships with suppliers and can usually get materials for much cheaper than a homeowner can. For DIYers, BBB recommends comparison shopping. Saving money

requires research, both online and with visits to home improvement and specialty supply stores. Homeowners can check out suppliers free online with BBB Reliability Reports™ at [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org).

**Get the right tools for the job**

Some DIY jobs can be done with as little as a screwdriver or a hammer, but most require specialized tools and equipment that add to the cost of the project. To achieve the desired results, it's important to use the right tools, which can mean renting large equipment and machinery as well as buying new tools and accessories.

For more trustworthy BBB advice on DIY projects, and to find reliable information on choosing and working with contractors, go to [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org).