

Things to Consider: Renovations DIY or Professional?

The choice between DIY and hiring a Professional is a matter of dollars and sense. It's a careful balancing act between money and time. Choosing to complete a renovation yourself may cost less and give a sense of satisfaction of a job well done, but it may also be stressful. Choosing to hire a professional may cost more but often results in a shorter timeline for renovations.

Here are some things to consider when choosing whether to 'Do it Yourself' or hire a Professional:

	DIY	Professional
Advantages	• Affordability • Control over the schedule • Ability to complete work to your personal expectations • Allows for more personalization and choice of custom materials • Can change your mind more easily with less notice • Less risk for scams • Personal satisfaction of work completed	• More time for you to focus on investing and your WHY • Experienced, trained and licensed • Access to materials at wholesale or contractor rates • Covered by liability insurance • Work is normally covered by warranty • Understanding of building codes and permitting process • Access to specialized tools
Disadvantages	• Takes time away from investing and your WHY • Physically demanding • Possible lack of experience • Possibility of overextending yourself or overestimating skills • Pay full retail for materials • Incomplete knowledge of building codes, permitting process and upcoming changes to legislation • Liability • No warranty	• Higher cost, labour is often most expensive component of a quote • Less control over timeline and scheduling • Can be limited to brands and materials the professional supplies or will work with • More difficult to change materials or scope of work mid-way through project • Fear of scams or misrepresentation

Factors to Consider when Deciding whether DIY is Right for You

- How much money will you save by not hiring a professional?
- Do you have the necessary skills or training for the renovation?
- Are you organized and able schedule the necessary components of the job?
- Does the renovation require a licensed professional as per government or municipal legislation?
- Have you researched local requirements for building permits?
- Does the job require specialized tools?

- Do you have difficulty making decisions or have a habit of regularly changing decisions during a renovation?
- Are you willing to accept the consequences of extending timelines or fixing mistakes?

Exercise Caution: Safety, Difficulty, Time

There are three major signs that a job is probably not recommended for DIY:

1. **It could kill you if you make a mistake.** Many jobs that require technical knowledge, such as electrical or structural changes, are jobs you'd want done by a contractor for safety reasons. Let a professional who is trained handle its dangers.
2. **It could destroy your home.** Major plumbing jobs, such as moving bathroom fixtures, or significant structural changes such as moving or removing walls fit into this category. Let a professional who is trained handle the risks and the liability.
3. **It requires a permit.** One warning sign that a job is probably too complicated for a DIY job is that it requires a building permit. In some areas a permit is issued only if working with a licensed contractor. The fact that you need a permit is a sign that you should think carefully about whether this is a job you really want to tackle. A contractor may be able to obtain all the necessary permits at once while a homeowner less familiar with permitting process may spend more time and effort securing the permits.

Ways to Cut Costs When Hiring a Professional

- Leverage the Keyspire Community. Ask other Keyspire Members for referrals and recommendations.
- Complete some of the initial demolition or material removal yourself.
- Offer your labour free on smaller tasks such as painting, cleaning, installing hardware, etc.
- Choose DIY for parts of the job you have previous experience with and contract out portions not within your skillset.
- Ask the contractor to provide you with material options at different price points (i.e. Good, Better, and Best). This allows more control over where to splurge and where to save.
- Avoid making multiple changes to the plan and scope of work once you sign off on it. Changes almost always add extra expense.
- Act as your own general contractor. Take time to manage the renovation and its schedule but hire subcontractors to complete the work.
- Watch for promotions, home shows, and off-season discounts.
- Ask for discounts if you refer others or provide a testimonial once good work is completed.
- Establish a long-term relationship. Contractors who know you have other properties and other work upcoming might be willing to negotiate.

"Sometimes you have to, as I say, build bridges where you can - but draw lines where you must."

~ Fred Thompson