

# What to Ask Before You Redo Your Bathroom

Whether you're deep in decision paralysis or just wondering where to start, these professional answers will guide you through the whole process.

*By Kristen Flanagan*



With a [Waterworks](#) tub under a wall of windows and wooden beams, this airy bath by Amber Interiors Design Studio feels like a spa.

**IT'S NO SECRET. RENOVATING A BATHROOM CAN** be a stressful process that includes a dizzying number of decisions, not to mention the possibility of unwelcome plumbing surprises. Factor in rising material costs and longer-than-ever lead times (see pp. 63 to 65 to get a full update on the status of these), and you might be tempted to throw in the proverbial towel. Ready for some encouraging news? This stat from the National Kitchen and Bath Association speaks for itself: **Bathroom**

**remodels can have a 72.7 percent return on investment—the highest of any home renovation project.** In other words, all the headaches will probably be worth it in the end. According to contractor service Sweeten, the average cost of a full bathroom update currently ranges from \$16,000 for a modest makeover to \$31,000 or more for a high-end remodel, so you'll want to protect your investment. Consider this your cheat sheet to making design decisions that will result in a room that meets your every need and then some.

## WHO WILL USE THE ROOM?

Because your kids probably don't need a bidet.



### < YOU

#### (OR YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE)

"Primary bathrooms are very intimate spaces," says designer Nina Garbiras. Prioritize what matters most, whether that's heated floors, a jetted shower, luxurious finishes, or custom storage. This is the place to splurge. "The various details need to convey an overall sense of sanctuary," says Garbiras, who devised this primary bath with a pair of steel and fluted glass doors and book-matched black-and-white marble that camouflages a low ceiling.



### ^ KIDS

"They change so much in the early years. Choose finishes that are timeless," says designer Ariel Okin, who created the pink kids washroom above. Sinks and bathtubs with backsplashes and durable materials like quartz will stand up to your little one's enthusiastic bubble bath and teeth-brushing. "Add personality," Okin says, "in the form of wallpaper, custom shower curtains, and hand towels."

### GUESTS >

"Typically clients don't want to spend as much on a guest bathroom, so we look at lower-cost materials for tiles and lighting," designer Ginny Macdonald says. "That being said, I still like them to feel cohesive and that can be done with a similar color palette or vanity design." This all-green space by Macdonald does just that. Cost-saving options include a prefab direct-to-consumer vanity like those from [Rejuvenation](#) or a drop-in tub, which is also great for resale value if you don't have one in another room.



PHOTOGRAPHERS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): GIEVES ANDERSON; DONNA DOTANI; SARA TRAMP.

# WHICH COMPONENTS ARE ESSENTIAL?

Invest in accents and finishes that suit your lifestyle and work flawlessly.



Hanging pendants flank a dual vanity, providing warm enveloping light. **Stitched Down-Light Pendants** by Nina Magon, [studiomlighting.com](http://studiomlighting.com)

## Multiple Light Sources

### WALL SCONCES

Lights on either side of a mirror or strip lighting above a vanity ensure that you'll be able to see yourself clearly—essential for applying mascara and getting a close shave.

### HANGING LIGHTS

Make a statement over a tub by installing a chandelier or a dramatic pendant. Both styles draw the eye upward and act as a decorative element in addition to casting light.

### FLUSH MOUNTS

For bathrooms short on height, these ceiling fixtures can provide ambient light, illuminating the entire room at the flip of a switch. Add dimmers so you can control the mood come bath time.

### RECESSED

Downlights provide light to brighten shower enclosures. With all bathroom lighting, make sure that your fixtures are damp rated for moisture exposure or wet rated for direct exposure to water.

## Proper Ventilation

Yes, you need an **exhaust fan** to prevent mold and mildew from growing. "They have nice, inconspicuous options now that aren't like the bulky ones of our childhoods," Okin says. Models with built-in lighting (and quiet fans) are the most discreet.

## Functional Faucets



### SINGLE HOLE

This style almost always comes with one handle that moves from hot to cold, which is ADA-compliant and makes life a little easier for those with physical limitations. Plus, the all-in-one design saves space.

**Allaria** Single-Handle Lavatory Faucet in brilliance black onyx/matte black, \$975. [brizo.com](http://brizo.com)



### WIDESPREAD

This layout separates the handles from the spout, requiring three holes that span 8 to 16 inches. These fixtures work best on vanities where space isn't an issue.

**Lavatory** Deck Mount Faucet with Gooseneck Spout in silicon bronze light, \$2,287. [rockymountainhardware.com](http://rockymountainhardware.com)



### CENTER SET

Set on a base and configured in a single unit, these can be either single- or double-handled; the latter allows for more control of water flow and temperature (good if you have young children).

**Saylor** Two-Handle Centerset Bathroom Faucet in chrome, \$198. [deltafaucet.com](http://deltafaucet.com)



### WALL MOUNTED

Requiring plumbing high up the wall, these can be costly to install. But "they make the top of the vanity one clean line," says designer Sarah Sherman Samuel, "and are easy to keep clean."

**Miscelo** Wall Mount Single Handle Bathroom Faucet Trim with polished chrome pot, \$1,048. [houseofrohl.com](http://houseofrohl.com)

# WHAT MATERIALS SHOULD I USE?

Designer favorites are also long lasting.



**COPPER** Unless treated to retain its penny-like luster, the soft metal will patina over time, blooming a rich brown color as shown on this showstopping soaking tub in a project by Darryl Carter. [Thompson Traders](#) offers copper tubs in a range of shapes and sizes.



**STAINLESS STEEL** Many bathroom vanities and fixtures feature this hygienic metal for its rust and stain resistance. In designer Colleen Bashaw's daughters' bathroom, an apothecary-style vanity puts the durable material center stage on drawers and doors.



**SOAPSTONE** Designer Heidi Lachapelle sourced this inky stone for a custom vanity. The material is nonporous, making it a lasting option for bathroom surfaces, but soft so it can scratch. [Caesarstone](#) makes a lookalike, Black Tempal, that's even more durable.



**MARBLE** "Every time you look at it, you want to fall in love all over again," says designer Brigette Romanek, who installed Calacatta viola marble in this powder room. Sealing the porous surface, especially if it is somewhere you will apply makeup, can help minimize staining.



For more of the best backsplash materials, go to [housebeautiful.com/bathroom-backsplash](#)

**WOOD** With a bathroom clad in natural wood paneling, like this one designed by architecture firm McLaren Excell, you'll feel like you're escaping to your very own sauna. If you're leaving the wood raw, a natural oil, like linseed, can impart a protective finish.



**WALLPAPER** Since powder rooms don't steam up, you can make like designer Clary Bosbyshell and clad them in a bold wallcovering: here, [Brunschwig & Fils](#)'s Bird and Thistle print. For bathrooms with tubs and showers, consider vinyl wallpaper instead.



For more bathroom wall ideas, go to [housebeautiful.com/bathroom-walls](#)

For more vanity ideas, go to [housebeautiful.com/bathroom-vanities](#)

For more of the best flooring materials, go to [housebeautiful.com/bathroom-floors](#)

PHOTOGRAPHERS (PREVIOUS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): WILLIAM ABRAMOWICZ/ART + COMMERCE; READ MCKENDREE/ERIN LITTLE; HEIDI HARRIS; NICOLE ENGLAND; MICHAEL P.H. CLIFFORD (THIS PAGE) NICOLE FRANZEN.

## Tile for Any Style



**STONE** tiles, like this mosaic, add personality, are impervious to water and offer great traction on a bathroom floor. [Bandana West Coast](#) in scarlett. [newravenna.com](#)



**PORCELAIN** tiles, produced by firing clay at high temperatures, are stronger than traditional ceramic tiles and slightly more expensive. [Robetta Tapis](#) in brown. [annsacks.com](#)



Mineral pigment is pressed into **CEMENT** tiles, resulting in the vibrant colors that have made this cost-effective option popular. [Pietta Donovan Woollahra](#) in opal. [walkerzanger.com](#)



Light-reflecting **GLASS** tile is a popular choice for decorative mosaics, walls, and backsplashes, as it adds a welcome sheen. [Alison Victoria](#) in ombre glass midnight. [tileshop.com](#)

# WHICH UPGRADES ARE WORTH IT?

Choose the latest technology that specifically fits your personal needs.

If you are particular about your private time:

## GENIUS TOILET

Meet [Kohler](#)'s most advanced intelligent toilet: the Numi 2.0. Preset your preferences—from the water temperature for personal cleansing to built-in lighting—or ask [Amazon](#) Alexa to adjust. UV sanitization, automatic flush, and a hands-free closing seat keep things ultra clean.



If you live for that end-of-day soak:

## THERAPY TUB

Floating in warm water and Epsom salt, or Float Therapy, is a spa favorite for its restorative effects. Try it at home with [Ito's](#) Flotation Freestanding Square Bathtub, which has an ergonomic headrest and back support to help you release the weight of your day.



If shower time is your sacred time:

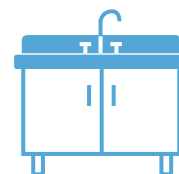
## SHOWER BODY JETS

[GROHE](#) Rainshower Aqua Body Sprays, with its slim profile, allows you to customize your water pressure between an energizing pulsating massage and a soothing rain spray, all while using 60 percent less water than other standard options.

## What if I Don't Want a Gut Reno?

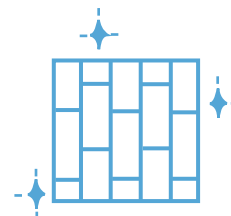


**Break Out a Roller** "Paint the cabinets, paint the walls, and add interesting artwork," says [Macdonald](#). Use a semigloss or satin paint finish; they repel moisture and can be wiped down.



## Replace the Countertops

[Macdonald](#) has also helped clients replace their countertops while keeping the existing vanity. "That's a little more labor intensive but can create a big difference," she says.



## Refinish Your Tile or Tub

To revive dated finishes or change the color without ripping them out, call on a company like [Miracle Method](#) that will deep clean the ceramic and porcelain surfaces and then apply primer, a bonding agent, top coat, and clear finish.



## Drop in a Shower or Tub

A one-piece acrylic liner, like precut options from [Delta](#) and [American Standard](#), fit over an old tub or shower for an almost instant makeover. [Bath Fitters](#) can install similar modules for you in a day.