

THE ESSENTIAL

BATHROOM

RENOVATION GUIDE



Planning, Materials, and Expert
Advice for a Long-Lasting
Renovation


BIRK HOMES

WELCOME



Welcome, and thank you for downloading The Essential Bathroom Renovation Guide.

A bathroom renovation is more than a visual upgrade. When planned well, it improves how the space functions and performs every day.

At Birk Homes, we believe successful renovations start with clear decisions. What happens behind the tile and inside the walls matters just as much as the finishes you see.

This guide outlines the key choices that shape a successful renovation, from layout decisions to durable materials suited for wet environments.

If you are planning a renovation in the Hamilton area, request your free consultation with the Birk Homes team today.

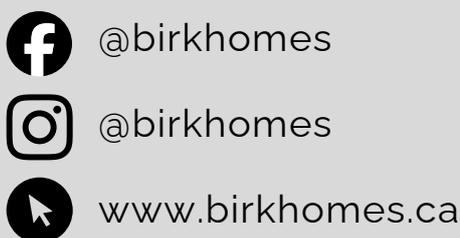




TABLE OF **CONTENTS**

SECTION I: PLANNING YOUR BATHROOM RENOVATION

- Questions to Ask a Contractor Before Hiring
- Bathroom Layouts
- Bathub vs. Walk-in Shower
- Single vs. Double Vanity

SECTION II: BATHROOM SELECTION ESSENTIALS

- Floor & Wall Tiles
- Bathing Fixtures
- Plumbing Fixtures
- Counters & Storage

SECTION III: PLANNING FOR LONG-TERM PERFORMANCE

- Moisture & Ventilation
- Electrical & Lighting
- Luxury & Comfort Upgrades
- Avoiding Costly Mistakes

SECTION IV: RENOVATION PLANNING CHECKLIST

- Renovation Costs & Budgets
- Structural & System Preparation, Tub & Shower
- Finish Materials, Vanity & Fixtures
- Lighting, Trim & Hardware

PLANNING YOUR **BATHROOM RENOVATION**

Most bathroom renovations begin with the desire to improve how the space looks, feels, or functions.

Before comparing finishes or fixtures, define the scope of the project. Will the layout remain the same, or will plumbing and structural changes be required? Is the renovation a cosmetic refresh or a full rebuild?

These decisions shape the budget, timeline, construction complexity, and long-term value.

Once the scope is clear, the following sections guide the key choices that influence durability and daily use.



QUESTIONS TO ASK A **CONTRACTOR** BEFORE HIRING

1

How do you protect the home during construction?

2

Who manages permits and inspections?

3

How do you ensure the bathroom will last long term, not just look good on completion day?

4

What steps do you take to prevent leaks and moisture issues?

5

What happens if an issue is discovered after walls are opened?

6

What warranty do you provide on workmanship?

Hiring a contractor? Review the most important questions to ask before a renovation to clarify scope, warranties, and construction practices. [➔](#)

BATHROOM TYPES

Clarifying these three structural choices first sets direction for the entire project. They guide cost expectations, construction scope, and daily usability before any finishes are selected.



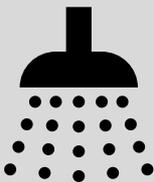
QUARTER BATHROOM

One plumbing fixture



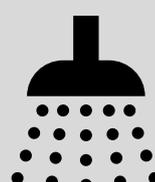
HALF BATHROOM

Two plumbing fixtures



THREE-QUARTER BATHROOM

Three plumbing fixtures



FULL BATHROOM

Four plumbing fixtures

BATHTUB VS WALK-IN SHOWER

The choice between a bathtub and a walk-in shower shapes how the bathroom functions, how much space it requires, and how it will be used over time.

BATHTUB



- Suitable for families with young children and households that want both bath and shower.
- Often preferred for resale, as many buyers expect at least one bathtub.
- Uses more floor space and generally uses more water, though a shower can be installed above the tub.

WALK-IN SHOWER



- Easier to access for daily use, especially for those who need ease of access.
- Creates a cleaner, more open look and offers greater flexibility in sizing and layout.
- Uses less water than a bathtub and can be built barrier-free for improved accessibility.

SINGLE VS DOUBLE VANITY

Deciding between a single or double vanity depends on available space, daily use, and whether the bathroom needs to accommodate more than one person at a time.

SINGLE VANITY



- Requires less space and works well in smaller bathrooms where layout flexibility is limited.
- Lower plumbing and cabinetry costs, with a simpler layout that is easier to design and install.
- Often easier to retrofit into existing bathrooms without major changes to plumbing or structure.

DOUBLE VANITY



- Requires a wider layout and typically increases plumbing and cabinetry costs.
- Better suited for shared bathrooms, allowing two people to use the space comfortably.
- Provides more storage and is often viewed as a desirable feature for resale.

BATHROOM
**SELECTION
ESSENTIALS**

This section focuses on the selections that shape how a bathroom looks, functions, and performs over time.

From surface materials and fixtures to storage and everyday components, these choices affect durability, maintenance, and usability.

While finishes define the style of the space, the most important selections determine how the bathroom works day to day.

Choosing durable materials, practical storage, and reliable fixtures helps ensure the renovation performs well long after installation.





FLOOR & WALL TILES

FLOOR TILE



Slip Resistance

Floor tile should prioritize traction, especially in showers and wet areas. Smaller tiles with more grout lines generally provide better grip.

Durability

Porcelain tile performs best for bathroom floors because it is dense, durable, and moisture-resistant.

Visual Impact

Tile size and colour influence how the space feels. Larger tiles create a cleaner look, while smaller tiles add texture.

WALL TILE



Moisture Protection

Wall tile protects surfaces from water and makes cleaning easier in wet areas.

Maintenance

Porcelain and ceramic tiles are typically the easiest to maintain, while natural stone requires more care.

Design & Layout

Tile layout shapes the room's overall appearance. Simple patterns tend to remain the most timeless.



BATHING FIXTURES

BATHTUBS



Material

Acrylic tubs are lightweight and cost-effective. Stone or composite tubs retain heat longer but increase cost and weight.

Placement

Confirm tub size and location early so surrounding walls and plumbing can be planned properly.

Resale Consideration

Many homes benefit from retaining at least one bathtub, particularly for families with children.

SHOWERS



Door Operation

Sliding doors save space, while swinging doors create a more open feel.

Glass & Enclosure

Thicker tempered glass provides a more solid feel. Frameless systems look cleaner but require precise installation. Wet room design eliminates the enclosure by waterproofing the surrounding floor area.

Shower Setup

A handheld shower on a slide bar improves flexibility for cleaning and everyday use.



PLUMBING FIXTURES

TOILETS



Cleanability

Skirted toilets eliminate exposed grooves where dust and grime collect.

Comfort Height

Comfort-height toilets are easier for most adults to use.

Simplicity

Choose reliable flushing performance and simple designs rather than unnecessary features.

FAUCETS & VALVES



Valve Quality

Shower valves sit behind the wall, so reliable components are important.

Shower Configuration

Rain heads add luxury, but a handheld wand improves flexibility and cleaning.

Accessibility

Single-handle faucets simplify operation and improve usability.

COUNTERS & STORAGE

VANITY & SINK



Countertops

Quartz and porcelain are typically the most practical options because they are durable, non-porous, and easy to maintain.

Sink Style

Undermount sinks simplify cleaning because debris can be wiped directly into the basin.

Storage

Drawer banks maximize usable space and keep everyday items easier to reach.

BATHROOM STORAGE



Shower Niches

Recessed niches store soaps and shampoos without cluttering the shower floor.

Planning

Measure common bottles before framing to ensure the niche height fits everyday products.

Alternatives

Corner shelves or quality caddies provide additional storage when niches aren't possible.

PLANNING FOR **LONG-TERM PERFORMANCE**

Many of the decisions that determine how well a bathroom lasts are not visible once the renovation is finished.

Waterproofing, ventilation, electrical planning, and plumbing infrastructure protect the space long after tile and fixtures are installed.

When planned properly during construction, they help prevent many of the problems that appear over time in poorly built bathrooms.

The checkpoints that follow highlight the key factors that support long-term performance.



MOISTURE

🚩 Risk

Water behind tile can damage framing and cause mold over time.

⚠️ Prevention

A waterproofing system behind shower tile protects the structure.

✅ Best Practices

After showers, wipe down wet glass and keep shower doors open.



VENTILATION

🚩 Risk

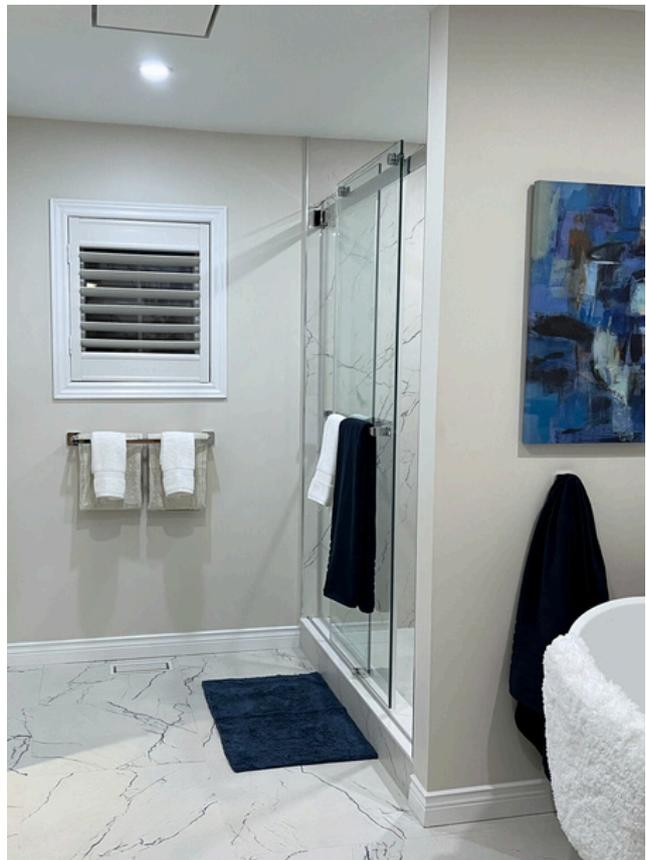
Humidity buildup can lead to mold, peeling paint, and lingering moisture.

⚠️ Prevention

A properly sized exhaust fan removes humidity during and after showers.

✅ Best Practices

Run fan 30–60 minutes after every shower, and clean fan grille yearly.



ELECTRICAL

🚩 Risk

Poor electrical planning can limit functionality or require expensive upgrades later.

⚠️ Prevention

Planning outlets and switches early supports future bathroom upgrades.

✅ Best Practices

Avoid overloaded outlets and use dimmer lighting.



LIGHTING

🚩 Risk

Poor lighting reduces visibility and makes everyday tasks more difficult.

⚠️ Prevention

Layered lighting and moisture-rated fixtures improve safety and usability.

✅ Best Practices

Use task lighting, replace dim bulbs, and maintain clean light fixtures.



LUXURY UPGRADES & COMFORT FEATURES

This stage introduces upgrades that elevate daily experience without altering core structure. Heated flooring systems, towel warming, integrated bidet seats, and LED mirrors enhance comfort, efficiency, and usability while complementing the technical systems installed earlier.

These additions are not essential to function, but when planned early, they integrate seamlessly and provide long-term value in comfort and convenience.

Heated Floors	The ultimate comfort. The heat rises, keeping the whole room warm.
Heated Towel Racks	A functional luxury that helps dry damp towels. And adds heat
Heated Bidet Seats	Warm water and a heated seat change the bathroom experience entirely.
LED Mirrors	Look for options with built-in defoggers and adjustable front/backlighting.

AVOIDING COSTLY MISTAKES

Here are the key details we focus on to help homeowners avoid problems and build bathrooms that perform well long after completion.



✓ **Confirm fixture layout early**

Changes to tubs, showers, or vanities after framing often require moving plumbing and increase renovation costs.

✓ **Use durable materials in wet areas**

Porcelain tile and quartz surfaces typically offer the best long-term performance with minimal maintenance.

✓ **Include practical shower features**

A handheld shower wand adds flexibility for cleaning and everyday use.

✓ **Plan for future accessibility**

Consider installing blocking in the walls for future grab bars, even if they are not installed immediately.

✗ **Don't use grout at corners or transitions**

Rigid grout cracks over time. Use 100% silicone where materials meet or change direction.

✗ **Don't underestimate storage needs**

Planning drawers, niches, and accessible storage early avoids clutter and expensive retrofits.

✗ **Don't install curbed showers if accessibility may be a concern**

Barrier-free or low-threshold showers are easier to use time and costly to change later.

Considering aging and accessibility? Download our [Aging-in-Place Guide](#) for more.

RENOVATION PLANNING CHECKLIST

This checklist outlines the major components and construction stages that influence scope and cost.

Use it to assign budget estimates, track actual spending, and ensure no critical items are overlooked during planning and execution.

Major Cost Drivers

1. Layout changes
2. Plumbing relocation
3. Tile size and material
4. Custom cabinetry
5. Shower glass type





RENOVATION COSTS & BUDGETS

Budget planning aligns your scope, material selections, and upgrade decisions with realistic investment expectations. The cost ranges below reflect a typical 5×8 bathroom renovation, helping you understand investment levels, anticipate major cost drivers, and maintain clarity as selections are finalized.

Basic/minor upgrade

\$8,000-14,000

Painting, upgrading vanity, faucets, toilet with budget friendly selections. May possibly be able to upgrade floor or wall tiles. Upgrading accessories like mirror, towel hooks, etc.

Complete upgrade

\$16,000-26,000

Remove all tiles, shower, toilet, vanity etc. Minor plumbing changes (tub to shower conversion), painting bathroom, updating bathroom exhaust fan. New vanity and toilet. Shower and floor tile. Waterproofing, and shower glass

Luxury upgrade

\$25,000-40,000

Complete upgrade, with heated floors, custom cabinets, higher end finishes and fixtures (faucet, toilet, accessories). Large format tiles, niche, led mirrors, quiet exhaust fan, potlights, etc.

(Final cost depends on scope, layout modifications, and material selections.)

Phase 1: Structural & System Preparation

Item	Budget	Actual
Demolition & Disposal	\$	\$
Framing & Subfloor	\$	\$
Waterproofing System	\$	\$
Plumbing Rough-in	\$	\$
Electrical Rough-in	\$	\$
Ventilation	\$	\$
Floor Heat System	\$	\$

Phase 2: Tub & Shower

Item	Budget	Actual
Bathtub	\$	\$
Tub Drain/Overflow	\$	\$
Shower Base/Pan	\$	\$
Shower Valve	\$	\$
Shower Trim Kit	\$	\$
Niche/Shelving	\$	\$

Phase 3: Finish Materials

Item	Budget	Actual
Floor Tile	\$	\$
Shower Wall Tile	\$	\$
Shower Floor Tile	\$	\$
Grout	\$	\$
Silicone	\$	\$
Underlayment	\$	\$

Phase 4: Vanity & Fixtures

Item	Budget	Actual
Vanity Cabinet	\$	\$
Countertop	\$	\$
Sink(s)	\$	\$
Faucets	\$	\$
Mirror	\$	\$
Toilet	\$	\$
Bidet Seat	\$	\$

Phase 5: Lighting & Trim

Item	Budget	Actual
Vanity Light	\$	\$
Pot Lights	\$	\$
Switches/Dimmers	\$	\$
Fan Timer	\$	\$
Baseboards	\$	\$
Paint	\$	\$

Phase 6: Hardware

Item	Budget	Actual
Shower Glass	\$	\$
Towel Bars	\$	\$
Robe Hooks	\$	\$
Toilet Paper Holder	\$	\$
Window Treatments	\$	\$

Commonly Forgotten Items

- Permit fees
- Temporary bathroom solution
- Dump fees
- Structural repair if discovered

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

A SUCCESSFUL BATHROOM RENOVATION BEGINS WITH CLARITY.

If you've worked through this guide and completed the checklist, you now have a solid foundation for your project. The next step is ensuring your ideas align with your home, your budget, and the realities of construction.

At Birk Homes, we approach renovations methodically. We evaluate structure before finishes, function before trends, and long-term durability before short-term aesthetics.

If you would like to review your layout, selections, or renovation scope, we invite you to book a complimentary 20-minute consultation. Send us your checklist, photos of your space, and any inspiration.

We'll help you determine what makes sense — and what doesn't — before construction begins.

Ready to start planning your renovation? [Request a quote.](#)



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