

shoulda, woulda,

Regrets? Anyone who's ever remodeled a kitchen—including This Old House staffers—can fess up to a few. Let our hard-earned hindsight help you steer clear of similar screwups

coulda...

Let's face it. Even the best-planned kitchen remodels hit rough patches. Unreliable contractors, late deliveries, and mismeasured materials just seem to go hand-in-hand with shocking estimates and shiny new faucets. But at the end of the road, it's often the little things—the greasy fingerprints on the stainless-steel fridge, the dings in the bamboo flooring, or the veneer peeling off of the cabinets—that drive us to distraction. We asked homeowners who'd recently endured the rigors of kitchen remodeling to vent: What would you do differently if you could remodel your kitchen all over again? Here's what they said—and how their battle scars can prevent you from making the same mistakes.

FIG. 3 In a kitchen lined with hard surfaces, dishwasher noise can rise to practically deafening levels.



“ the regret > **WE FORGOT...**

We let our electrical contractor convince us that we needed two light panels with three switches each in our 20-by-12-foot kitchen: It's such overkill, and still there are no undercabinet lights, which would really improve the ambience. —*ALLEGRA AND ANDREW GULINO, FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA*

> Next time I'll carve out a small kitchen office, since that is where so many of the little things that matter so much seem to happen: bill paying, homework, birthday-card writing, phone calls to friends.... —*MARIA ZELIN, FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT*

> Our kitchen doesn't have a sense of community: I'd add an island or peninsula where family and friends can congregate while I cook. —*DONNA COTENNEC, PHILIPSTOWN, NEW YORK*

> We wish we had put in more pullout shelving. Our cabinets are very deep, which gives us a lot of storage space, but creates major problems every time you try to retrieve something from the back. You can't reach into the cabinets without having the items in front fall out on the floor. —*JIM BLASI AND MICHAEL TOZZOLI, WESTWOOD, NEW JERSEY*

better bet > Get Professional Advice

You don't need to hire someone to select every drawer pull for you, but sometimes it's wise to consult with an architect, kitchen designer, or lighting expert to help you do some basic, schematic design work or to help you brainstorm material selection. Designing a kitchen isn't your day job, so you're bound to make mistakes based on inexperience. The pros, on the other hand, are immersed in knowledge about the best materials, techniques, and gadgets that will make the most of your space. In the long run, an hour or two in consultation with an expert could save you lots of time and energy—and quite possibly money, too!

The most important thing to remember is that everybody screws up once in a while. "Houses evolve, so it's okay to go back and fix things you don't like or to keep updating over time," says Minneapolis designer David Heide. "Your home needs to work for you, and you don't want to spend 20 years being annoyed by something, especially if it's relatively easy and inexpensive to fix." ■