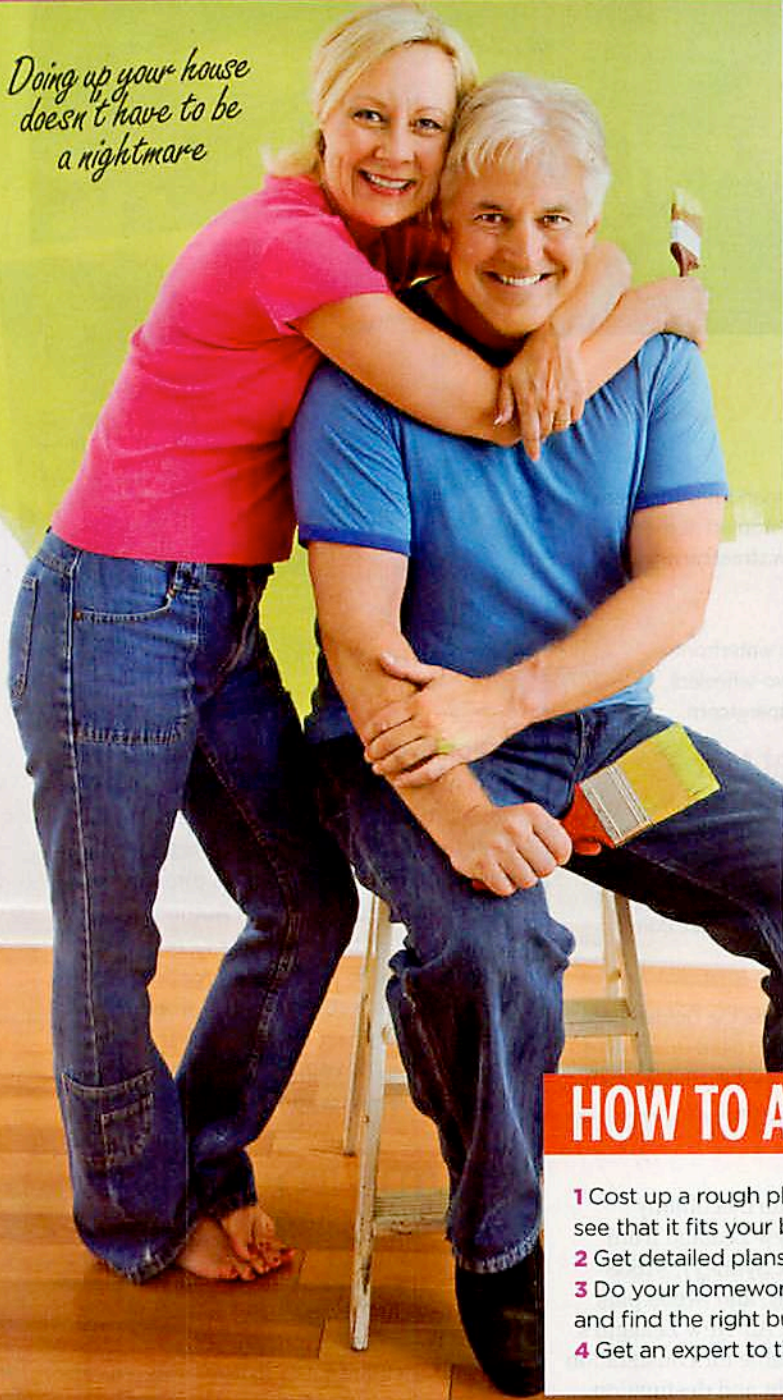


Whether you're sorting out your garden, fixing up your house or you want to fit

Renovation rescue

Doing up your house doesn't have to be a nightmare



The hit '80s flick *The Money Pit*, starring Tom Hanks and Shelley Long, perfectly sums up what a comedy of errors renovating your dream home can be.

Some scenes may have been far-fetched, but the film was a hit because moviegoers could relate it to their own DIY disasters.

The decision to renovate can be an expensive one – both emotionally and financially, but it can also be a rewarding one. Whether you opt to DIY or call in the experts to DIFY (do it for you), there are a few important things to consider.

Amanda Falconer, author of *The Renovator's Survival Guide* (\$26.95, Penguin), learnt the hard way when she set out to renovate her Sydney home. The project cost \$70,000 more than the original contract price, took two years longer and ended in four years of legal action.

Amanda says the two most important things when renovating are planning and research. 'There's no question in my mind the builder I chose was as shonky as they come, but in fairness I didn't do my homework,' she says. 'I'd heard of people's renovation horror stories, but thought: "That's not going to happen to me."

'The builder was shonky, but in fairness I didn't do my homework'

'No matter the size of your renovation, I can't overstate the importance of detailed plans as they provide a solid foundation for the quote but also because they take away room for interpretation,' Amanda says. And to avoid budget blowouts, shop around for materials and buy everything up front – that way the quote is as complete as can be. You can nab all sorts of materials at well-below-retail prices without cutting corners on quality if you know where to go. She says: 'You have to think: "What's another way for me to get the look without spending premium money?"'

HOW TO AVOID RENOVATION PITFALLS

- 1 Cost up a rough plan and see that it fits your budget.
- 2 Get detailed plans done.
- 3 Do your homework properly and find the right builder.
- 4 Get an expert to thoroughly check through your building contract.
- 5 Stay vigilant and keep all of your documentation.
- 6 Get a building expert to check the quality of the job.
- 7 Shop around for materials.



craftcorner

Q My grandkids are always giving me wonderful drawings, which I love to display. The only trouble is, I have so many I've run out of wall space. Do you have any suggestions?

GRACE NOTTS, WEMBLEY DOWNS, WA.

A If you've run out of display room for your little ones' masterpieces, make them into jigsaw puzzles. Get them to draw or paint some new designs straight onto a blank jigsaw or stick on an existing picture and cut it out to create unique puzzles. You can have fun solving them, too. For details and where to buy the puzzles, visit www.riotstores.com.au.



CRAFTY IDEA

Instead of using turps to clean up oil paints, use baby oil. It takes paint off hands and brushes, leaves both soft, and is safe and non-toxic.

A. GUTHRIDGE, MOUNT GAMBIER, SA.