

Should You Borrow to Renovate?



With interest rates likely to remain low, some homeowners see borrowed cash as a means to kick-start a major home improvement. Yet many critics blame easy credit as the cause of unreasonable consumer debt. If you're thinking of securing a loan to improve your home – even at a very low interest rate – you should consider the following advice to ensure you do not put yourself at unreasonable financial risk:

- Do not rely on renovations to immediately improve the resale value of your home.
- Look into alternative means of financing, so that you do not use your home as collateral for a renovation loan.
- Budget the pace of your payments to contractors, keeping track of progress (including performance guarantees and contract obligations) so that you are not paying out borrowed money for work that is not yet completed.

Safe Storage of Household Chemicals

Many consumers assume that anything they can buy will be safe to use and can be stored at home under “normal” conditions. However, they are ignoring the basics of safe chemical practices that are established to prevent harm to people in their homes. Here are some rules regarding the use and storage of common household cleaners and solvents.

- Consult all labels. Never mix cleaning products (such as combining bleach with ammonia, drain cleaner or vinegar), as the result can produce harmful vapours. Certain chemicals must even be stored separately to avoid combustion or explosion through contact.



- Ensure caps and lids are secure to prevent spills and the evaporation of contents. Keep all household chemicals out of the reach of children (eg. do not store under sinks, unless childproofed).
- Store hazardous materials away from heat and direct sunlight. Heat and sunlight may degrade chemicals and deteriorate storage containers and labels.

Condo owners should check their regulations to ensure they do not contravene safety and liability rules.

New One-Step Residential Paint Needs No Primer

New paints on the market are eliminating the need to apply a coat of primer on walls before the selected colour. Although more expensive than regular household paints, these products claim to be easy to apply and give results that are just as effective as using primer plus paint. That's welcome news for both professionals and do-it-yourselfers, as they save the cost of the primer and – perhaps more importantly – the time and aggravation of applying an extra coat.



Organize Your Storage Space To Improve Your Living Space

More efficient use of available storage areas in your home will help reduce clutter and create more useful living space. Here are a few tips to better organize storage in your home.

- Attack clutter in one room at a time. The kitchen is a good place to start because we tend to store utensils and cookware that we rarely use. Start by culling each drawer, cupboard or closet and moving out-of-season or seldom-used items away from prime storage areas. Put the junk aside to sell, give away or trash before a specified date.
- After sorting, rethink the design of each storage area. Install bins on rollers in lower cupboards and vertical racks for flat items like cookie sheets. Put organizer trays in drawers, racks and shelf bins in pantries, and pegboards in broom closets (to hang large pots and other cumbersome items).



- Invest in storage systems for entranceways, attics and closets. Many D-I-Y versions are available. Where clutter seems particularly overwhelming, consider converting bare walls into storage space by installing shelving or a cabinet. Be sure not to impede sightlines, especially between doors and windows. If you're not handy, consult with a retail storage advisor or building centre specialist, or go online for more solutions.