Change Order Planning Guide

How to Avoid Surprise Costs, Delays & Regret in Your Remodel

Most homeowners don't think much about change orders . . . **until they're in the middle of one.** And by that point? It's usually costing more than money. It's costing time, trust, and peace of mind. This guide flips that script. Whether you're planning your first remodel or your fifth, these questions and tips will help you **stay ahead of surprises, avoid vague scopes, and feel confident in your choices** before the first wall comes down.

The 3 Types of Change Orders, Know What You're Dealing With

Type 1 - Client-Requested: You see the space coming together and think: "*You know what? Let's add that feature we talked about.*" This is about choice, not chaos.

Type 2 – Unforeseen Conditions: When we open a wall and find: old wiring, water damage or structural quirks. Some surprises are inevitable, but a good builder will warn you what's likely and plan ahead.

Type 3: Builder-Missed: The tough one. A measurement missed. A discussion not documented. These are avoidable with **clear processes and attention to detail.**

Bonus! Beware of False Type 1s
Looks like you changed your mind . . .
But really, it's **a lack of planning or visualization upfront.**

Key Questions to Ask Before You Sign Anything

Scope & Planning

- "Will we finalize selections and layouts before construction begins?"
- "Do you ever start demo before design is complete?"
- "How do you make sure the scope includes everything the client is expecting?"

Change Order Process

- "How do you handle change orders?"
- "Do you categorize them?"
- "How many do you average per project and why?

Site Conditions & Experience

- "What common surprises have you seen in homes like mine?"
- "Do you include those risks in the scope or budget?"
- "How do you investigate before demo to avoid issues?"

Visualization & Confidence

- "Do you offer 3D renderings or design walk-throughs?"
- "How do you help clients feel confident before construction starts?"
- "What happens if I want to change something mid-project?"

Red Flags to Watch For

- "We'll figure that out once we start."
- "Change orders are just part of the process, it's no big deal."
- "We don't really do change orders."
- "We'll get your design sorted while we're demoing." Translation: They're building the plane while flying it.

What Good Planning Looks Like

- Design finalized before demo
- All selections chosen ahead of time
- Builder investigates for risks early
- 3D renderings for decision-making
- Transparent change order log — if one comes up, it's documented and explained

Your remodel should feel calm — not chaotic. Use this guide to interview builders, clarify expectations, and set yourself up for success. And if you want a team that does all this by default? We'd love to talk.

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