

home

“Home  
wasn't built  
in a day.”

Jane Ace,  
*The Fine Art of  
Hypochondria*

renovation handbook:  
cabinets and  
countertops

Pull out and save this comprehensive guide to  
remodeling kitchens and bathrooms—the  
first of a series on sprucing up your home.

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## countertops

From meal prep to the occasional spill, these surfaces take a real beating, so it's important to know how the different types compare.

### before you begin

Consider how you live in your kitchen or bath. If you tend to be a messy cook and want to wipe up spaghetti-sauce spills quickly—with just soap and water—look into easy-to-maintain laminate. If durability is your main concern, opt for engineered stone or granite; both are virtually indestructible. And if you're a neatnik, "you should probably think twice about marble," says Peggy Fruin, a kitchen and bath designer in East Hampton, New York. "It stains so easily

that you'll be a nervous wreck whenever someone puts a glass down on it."

### consider your options

What type of sink do you want? If you're looking for an undermount sink, which lies below the counter, you can choose any material except laminate, which is glued together and is therefore not 100 percent waterproof. With solid surface, stainless steel, and concrete, you can have a seamless sink, which is made of the same material as the counter.

If you prefer natural and engineered stones, remember that they can come either honed or polished. Honed counters offer a casual, matte look, but they absorb moisture, so they need to be treated annually with a penetrating sealer (about \$39 for a quart, [www.stonecare.com](http://www.stonecare.com)). Polished counters are glossier and require less stringent care.

### keep in mind

While shopping around, it helps to have a rough idea of how much material you'll need. (Multiply the length by the width, in feet, of the planned counter to get the square footage.) That way, you can guesstimate how much money you'll spend. For more information on the 12 most common countertop materials, see following pages.