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BATHROOM BASICS

KEEP THESE PLANNING
FUNDAMENTALS IN MIND SO
YOUR BATHROOM RENOVATION
IS KEPT SMOOTH-FLOWING





While most people put much thought into their living rooms and bedrooms, the bathroom, usually the smallest room in the house, is often neglected. Despite its size, this space doesn't just serve its utilitarian functions – it's now a personal retreat, too. So, consider these important factors before you go full steam ahead in your bathroom renovations, especially in terms of space, usage and budget.

Size does matter

How big your bathroom is will determine the kinds of appliances and fittings you can accommodate. Apart from basics such as a water closet (WC), washbasin and shower, is there space for non-essential items like a bathtub and a bidet? A smaller space may mean you need to make do with a pedestal-style washbasin; a larger bathroom affords the space for a vanity countertop with a built-in sink and storage cabinets.

Bathroom battles

Another important consideration is whether the bathroom is for your exclusive use or shared with a spouse, family members or roommates. If it is to be used by more than one person, you may need to think about your daily routines – do you all make a beeline for it at about the same time every day? A bathroom with an enclosed compartment for the toilet allows two people to shower or brush their teeth, and use the toilet at the same time, while still maintaining an acceptable level of privacy for each.

Money issues

As with all renovation projects, work out a budget and stick to it. Be realistic about the cost, both in terms of how much the contractor will charge you for the renovation as well as for purchasing the appliances and fittings. While it may be nice to have a WC and whirlpool bath with fancy features, ask yourself whether they fit your budget. Reusing your current plumbing will save you the cost of hacking the walls to relocate the placement of pipes, too.

Such cost considerations will help you manage your expectations and make firm decisions right from the start, rendering the whole renovation process much easier later on.

DESIGN TIP

If floor space in your bathroom is limited, consider hanging shelves or building small ledges for toiletries.

DESIGN TIP

Put awkward corners in oddly shaped bathrooms to good use by selecting "slim-line" appliances and fittings that fit such spaces well.

Planning guidelines

While there can be some flexibility in configuring your bathroom layout and a wide variety of choices in the way of appliances and fittings, there are a few rules of thumb to bear in mind.

The three key fittings – WC, washbasin and shower/bathtub – can be placed in a linear arrangement side by side, in a triangulated configuration, or a combination of both (see illustrations below). "There is no hard and fast rule as long as there is a logical flow that minimises any retracing of steps," says Rene Maan, managing director of Interior Affairs by Hydro Style. Simply put, locate the washbasin next to the toilet for easy access – never the shower in between toilet and washbasin. The washbasin should also be positioned nearest the entry/exit point, as it should be the last thing you use before leaving the bathroom.

When it comes to bathroom layouts, efficiency is key. Some things are simply common sense, such as ensuring that the bathroom and cabinet doors do not cause any obstruction. If space is a constraint, you may wish to consider sliding or bi-fold doors, or have your bathroom door swing outwards instead.

Be mindful of clearances. The last thing you want is to be constantly bumping into fixtures while going about

your grooming routine. The planning and design data from the *Metric Handbook* (edited by David Adler and published by Architectural Press), commonly used by local architects, recommends a washbasin height of 850mm to accommodate a wide range of users. (Note that this height can be adjusted according to your needs.) A minimum clearance of 600 to 650mm is also recommended between any fixtures or between fittings and walls to allow for passage and manoeuvrability.

Enclosures

Shower enclosures are necessary to keep the rest of the bathroom dry and thus safe. While a WC enclosure is less essential in a personal bathspace, it can facilitate simultaneous use by more than one person in the case of a shared bathroom.

Lighting and ventilation

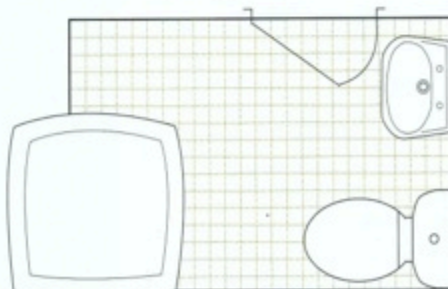
Like any other room in the house, a bathroom needs to be bright and airy. But it is not always practical to have a window opening large enough for optimum natural lighting and ventilation, as it compromises on privacy. You may need to opt for artificial lighting and mechanical ventilation like a fan.

"In addition to general illumination, task lighting should be provided for each area in the bathroom, such as for grooming

BASIC BATHROOM LAYOUT Set aside space for the three areas of activity: the washbasin or vanity for grooming, the toilet and the shower/bathtub. Even in the smallest bathrooms, allow for some elbow room between each area for easy movement.

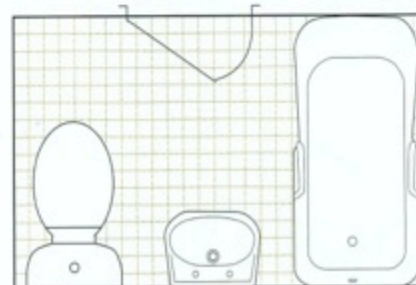
a *Triangulated configuration*

In an oddly shaped space, make room for the door to swing open by placing the washbasin near it.



b *Linear, side by side*

An efficient bathroom layout places the washbasin between the toilet and shower/bathtub.



and showering. Indirect cove lighting built into wall recesses or ledges will help create a softer ambience," says Maan. Dimmer switches are versatile in catering to a range of lighting needs and moods.

Water pressure

"In general, a pressure of two bar (one bar is the unit of pressure roughly equivalent to the atmospheric pressure on Earth at sea level) or 29psi is sufficient for a showerhead that is 200mm in diameter. But for households using instant water heaters, the water pressure may be inadequate for larger showerheads," says Jayce Lim, retail sales executive at Hemsley Holding. Water pressure is measured using a gauge on your external or laundry area hose bibb.

Lim suggests avoiding large overhead showers if the water pressure is less than ideal, as you will not enjoy a good bath. If you are still keen on the idea of a therapeutic rainshower, Maan suggests that you try installing a concealed thermostatic shower valve or shower mixer to accommodate the different water pressure needs of various showerheads.

Design trends

Bathspaces are moving away from being merely utilitarian and inching towards fostering enjoyment and relaxation.

As Maan puts it: "The bathroom is like a sanctuary where you can just shut the door and enjoy a degree of peace and quiet." This explains why many homeowners are paying more attention and investing more money in their bathspaces. Many are inspired by spa-style designs and fittings, while some even go for semi-outdoor bathrooms.

As people become more aware of the needs of the elderly, more thought is also being given to designing bathrooms to meet their unique requirements. "It is important that homeowners look into barrier-free products such as support rails, grab bars and shower seats to make the bathroom safer and more user-friendly for the elderly," says Jessica Tan, director of Architectural Hardware.

"In the past, most of these products were used mainly in healthcare environments, but we are receiving more enquiries from homeowners," she adds.

As bathrooms serve a very important purpose, make sure you get all these basics, including plumbing- and electrical-related constraints, right before you can even think about making them beautiful. ●

Shower or Bath?



While the idea of relaxing in a warm bath after a long day may seem absolutely enticing, be realistic. Ask yourself how often you will actually take a bath. It is not practical to install a bathtub just for occasional use, and then have to contend with the inconvenience of showering in one on a daily basis. Whether you have the space for it is another issue. "A bathtub must be adequately sized so you can straighten your legs. Otherwise, it is going to be anything but relaxing."

- JAYCE LIM, HEMSLEY HOLDING