

Childproof Your Remodel

Designing a space with kids in mind

by **Laura Orfield**



Home safe home

Safety is a major concern among homeowners with children. For some, it means keeping kids safe and sound at home. These homeowners are securing their property with alarm systems and fences to make their home a safe haven. They are also building sport courts, entertainment rooms and more to provide a one-stop shop for child's play, under the parent's supervision.

Another safety issue of concern to homeowners is ensuring their children are not harmed during the actual remodeling process. The following tips can help:

- Keep children and pets away from construction areas.
- Choose a company that will keep all tools and materials picked up and in designated places.
- Make sure your remodelers use floor protection and dust barriers before and during construction.
- Set designated working hours for your remodelers, so you can coordinate their schedule with your children's schedule.

Play rooms

Often, a family's basement or loft/attic is the children's play area. Here are common trends in these spaces:

- For younger children, play areas consist of toys and storage. For these types of spaces, install soft, warm flooring to create a safer and more comfortable environment. Also, consider built-in cabinets to make the toy storage an attractive part of the area.
- For older children and teenagers, play areas are often about entertainment. For these types of spaces, consider soundproof materials for the floor, walls and ceiling, to lessen the disruption of the rest of the house. Of course, surround sound, home theater systems, televisions, stereos and equipment unique to your child's interests should also be considered for inclusion in this room.
- Bars are a common trend in basements. Make your bar kid-friendly by creating a kitchenette with a fridge and microwave, so your children and their friends can easily make snacks and get cold drinks. Lock up any and all alcohol in a hard-to-reach area.
- Consider adding a bathroom to the basement or loft/attic space, so your children and friends have easy access.



Kitchen design

The heart of every home, kitchens are a common place for children to frequent. Here are some precautions homeowners can take to child-proof their kitchen design:

- You can achieve the look of stainless steel with kid-friendly benefits. Whirlpool's new Satina line and Frigidaire's new Easy Care line look like stainless steel, accept magnets but do not fingerprint.
- Unless you are installing an induction cooktop (a cooktop that don't get hot when cooking), it is best to place the cooktop in a location other than an island or near the breakfast bar where kids sit and could be easily burned.
- Consider purchasing appliances with a childproof lock/switch, disabling the appliance from being turned on even if a child is pushing buttons or flipping switches.
- Select easy-to-clean flooring for the kitchen to reduce your stress with common messes.
- Choose a cabinet finish that is natural or stained wood. Painted cabinetry tends to show fingerprints and smudges.
- Consider including a computer work area in or near the kitchen, so you can supervise children while they are on the computer.
- Undermount sinks allow you to wipe directly into the sink, whereas lipped sinks are more difficult to clean around.

Pat Grieg from Guyer's Builder Supply in Plymouth contributed to these tips.

Design for growth

Flexibility is a main factor to consider when designing areas with children in mind. As children grow, their needs and interests change. The spaces they occupy should also change to keep up with the growth. Keeping this in mind when choosing storage options, color schemes, furniture and more is an important step to ensuring the space's long-term functionality.



The mudroom

A widely popular, new trend in homes is the mudroom. This is a convenient area where families have cubbies, flip-top benches, hooks and lockers to keep the mess from outside contained. The best place for a mudroom is near the garage or main entry. Install easy-to-clean, water- and stain-resistant flooring in this area.

Bathroom trends

Designing a bathroom with children in mind can be creative and fun. Here are some tips:

- Bright colors are a popular trend in baths, especially in a child's bathroom.
- Wood or tile wainscoting is recommended, as it wears well against toys and water splashing.
- Like the kitchen, undermount sinks allow the countertop mess to be wiped right into the sink.
- Consider installing a handheld shower spout, for ease with bathing a child and washing their hair.
- Flip-top benches are popular near the tub, to create a comfortable place for parents to sit and dry off their children, also serving as storage for bath toys.
- Karen Dinius of Dinius Plumbing in White Bear Lake recommends Kohler's new Transitions Quiet-Close Toilet Seat (pictured above), which has a flip-up lid and two flip-up seats. The top seat is smaller so children can sit comfortably, and the second seat is normal-sized for grown children and adults. The seats are removable for easy cleaning.



Photo courtesy of Kohler

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