

Creating a Custom Shower - An Article Courtesy of Kohler



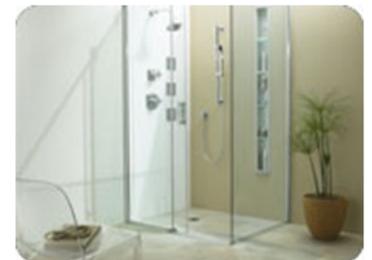
Imagine, after a long and stressful day, coming home to a shower worthy of a day spa. Soft music, color-changing lights, soothing water massage and gentle steam--the ultimate shower we all dream about. Well, dream no longer: Custom showers are quickly becoming high on the list of home must-haves. And with all the new products and technology available, the perfect shower has never been so easy to achieve.

Whether you're building a new home or remodeling, adding a custom shower is a great way to add luxury and value. But there are a few things to keep in mind.

First and foremost, "Avoid the trap of going on a shopping spree and cherry-picking your products without planning," says designer Deborah Burnett, ASID of Design Service Inc. "Planning before you shop will not only create a comprehensive look, but will also prevent you from going over budget."

Getting started

To avoid headaches for both you and your contractor, plan ahead and look at some basics to ensure that your dream shower will fit your space. This is especially crucial for non-extensive remodel projects where available square footage may be limited.



Measure the space, wall-to-wall and floor-to-ceiling. Be sure to consider the location of room features like windows, doors and vents. This will help you determine how much space you have to work with and what size products to choose.



Once you have measured, consider sketching a rough layout to help you visualize your space and make it easier to choose components. Are you using a corner or just one wall? Is the ceiling low enough to allow for overhead faucets? Will it work for two people at once? Your layout will help you answer these questions.

Make sure your custom shower is compatible with your water heater, drain and water pressure. Check the specs on your current water heater, and talk to your plumber or contractor to determine the best layout and products for your space.

Says designer Carol Schalla, Midwest Living magazine Senior Home Editor, "Obviously space and existing plumbing locations can affect cost greatly, so see what's possible within those confines. After that, think about how you and your family use your shower on a daily basis."

Pamper yourself



After the initial planning comes the fun part. Now you can fantasize about the kind of experience you're seeking. Are you looking for rhythmic, massaging bodysprays on each wall? How about an overhead faucet to simulate rain and some color-changing lights? There are hundreds of variations when it comes to custom showers, so we've broken it down into a few categories to make browsing easier.

High-Tech Features: A variety of high-tech amenities carry showers into the 21st century, and allow for a completely personalized showering experience. Electronic shower controls allow users to save their showering preferences, from temperature and water flow to lighting and music. Even steam and water-saving options can be controlled with the touch of a button.

Water delivery: Create your own personal oasis with a variety of showerheads, bodysprays and handshowers. From pulsing blasts to gentle mists, you can build the experience that fits your needs and style.

Sleek and flush bodysprays save space, while rotating handshowers direct water where you need it in an innovative and fun way. You can even imagine you're enjoying nature with showerheads that simulate the feel of rain.



Shower surround: If you're not tiling the walls and floor of your shower, consider a shower module and receptor. Remember, drain location is key. Left-, center-, and right-side models are available, along with seating options for easy transition. Grab bars can also be included to help make showering safe and comfortable.

Shower doors come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and styles. Whether you're incorporating a corner shower, working in a tight space, or using steam controls, there's a shower door for every need.



Keep clutter in its place by incorporating shower storage. Easy-to-clean shelving units mount into any shower wall or module, and come in a variety of styles, colors and finishes for a seamless fit.

"Make sure to investigate all the fabulous new options available to help you create your own personal body spa or performance shower experience" says designer Barbara Ince, ASID, Susan Fredman Design Group. "Take into consideration any personal health issues you may have. And don't forget to incorporate a place to sit or a place to store shampoo."

Design

While you're perusing components, you'll want to be thinking about your shower's overall design, including colors, materials, fabrics and lighting. If you're remodeling an existing space, designer Deborah Burnett suggests the mantra: "Observe, create, then decorate."



"To observe, stand in the bathroom and just look" says Burnett. "Take photographs. Observe the room, hallway, adjacent rooms, exterior walls outside the bathroom; then sit and look at your photos with a cup of coffee and just think."

Whether remodeling or building new, a great source of inspiration is design magazines and blogs. Save your favorite designs and ideas in a notebook or online. Start collecting brochures, paint samples and color swatches to help gather your ideas together.

Visiting showrooms is a great way to get product information and see products in a room setting. To get a feel for the bigger picture, make a point of visiting open houses and idea homes--either in person or online.

Your shower should always blend with the rest of your bathroom. If you like a coordinated look, consider using consistent faucet styles and finishes throughout. If you use a lot of natural materials in your home, stone or neutral-hued ceramic tiles will help keep the look in the bathroom seamless. To create interest or a focal point, you might think about a tile mosaic in the shower. Play around with different materials and colors, and see what fits your personality as well as your home décor. Remember, a custom shower is all about you, so have fun with it!

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