



Reno rules
 → Ideally you should document a clear scope of work for every single tradie and have them agree to the cost for that scope of work. This is the only way to ensure you come close to your budget. It's just as important (if not more important) to agree on a timeline with your tradies.
 → Write a clear brief and spend time going through it. It keeps everyone accountable and you can track how much you're spending if you go over specific timings.
 → Unexpected things will crop up so you should always set aside at least another 5 per cent for contingencies.

Drab to fab in 12 weeks



Lana Taylor Yellow Pages spokesperson and renovations expert from Three Birds Renovations

When the Three Birds Renovations team of Lana, Bonnie and Erin (above) first saw this blond brick house in northwestern Sydney it was liveable but tired. The upstairs balcony hadn't been used for years and had to be torn down due to safety concerns. The team which has been renovating for sale since 2014, spent 12 weeks planning and executing a top-to-bottom refresh, to reveal a family-friendly house with an emphasis on outdoor living which sits comfortably in its leafy setting.

What were the design priorities?
 We redesigned the lower level by removing walls and opening up the space to integrate the kitchen and living zones. We also knew a huge master bedroom with walk-in-robe and ensuite is a must for most parents.

How important was it to include a big outdoor area and how has that improved the livability of the house?

We place huge importance on creating amazing alfresco spaces in all our houses. There was a small back porch that we kept in place to anchor a new deck extension. We painted the porch and deck the same colour so the space felt like one big, connected area.

We used inexpensive French doors to connect the inside dining room with the outside and built an external servery around the original brickwork to provide bar-like seating outside the kitchen. This space was then made uber-practical by adding two huge gas-strut windows which open out from the kitchen to the servery (above, inset).

What is the one renovating mistake you will never make again?

We once tried painting the brick exterior ourselves using normal brushes. OMG! Six hours later we had only painted one square metre. We now always call in the professionals and get our painter to spray the outside bricks. And as the Yellow Pages research shows, at around \$50/hour a

professional painter could be more affordable than you think and so much easier.

When a renovation budget is tight, where is the money best spent?

If you're renovating-to-sell, spray-painting your red brick exterior is a fast and effective way to update and bring back some street appeal. If you're renovating-to-stay then you should spend the money in those rooms where you spend the most time.

Besides painting the exterior bricks what are some other budget tips for updating a 1970s/80s house?

→ **Paint:** Nothing brightens up the interior of a house more than a fresh coat of paint.

→ **Replace your tapware:** Tapware can be replaced every few years for a fresh new look.

→ **Clear out your yard:** Get rid of dead plants and trees and replace them with a few feature plants and new plantings.

→ **Add feature lights:** Call an electrician and have him install pendant lights in key places like over the kitchen island and dining table.

How do you make an all-white scheme work when you have kids?

White is a great colour to freshen up your home and make it feel bigger and brighter but is it kid-friendly? Absolutely. Paint has come a long way on the technology front. You can now buy paint (such as Taubmans Pure Performance) which is not only antibacterial and low odour but also highly washable.

Any tips for finding and hanging on to good tradies?

→ **Communication:** Ask yourself, which one did you have the best conversation with? Who do you feel understands your expectations best?

→ **Quality:** Ask what job they recently finished and if you could see photos.

→ **Credentials:** It's always best to work with licensed and insured tradies.

→ **Professionalism:** If they can't provide a



tip
 SOFT FURNISHINGS ARE A QUICK AND EASY WAY TO UPDATE A TIRED INTERIOR

written quote then they're probably not the best choice. Another easy test is taking note if they turned up on time to quote!

→ **Timing:** Talk with your tradie about the strict timeline you have for this job and how they are going to manage it.

→ **Be hospitable:** Offer them the occasional coffee and if you pay them on time, they'll be sure to keep coming back!

What happens if that relationship turns sour mid project?

With nearly three in five homeowners planning some kind of home project within the next two years (according to Yellow Pages 2016 research), the majority of us are going to be dealing with a tradie sometime soon. The harsh reality is that sometimes the relationship breaks down and can't be fixed.

Before taking any action evaluate what your options are and how far from completion the job is. If your tradie is close to finishing then perhaps just grin and bear it.

If there is still a way to go, you might be doing everyone a favour by paying him for work done so far and then bringing in someone new to finish the job.

Pictures Hannah Blackmore
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The refreshed living space is connected to the outdoors via inexpensive french doors.

