

**2: What headaches should be expected during a renovation?**

**Holmes:** "Most people don't realize it but *they* cause their own headaches. Renovations don't have to be frustrating. They can—and should—be exciting. There are three important steps I can recommend to prevent headaches. First, take your time. Don't be in a hurry to get things done. Instead, be sure to get them done right. Second, this is the time and place to find out about new materials. For example, while medium density fibreboard [MDF] is the pick of choice for most cabinetmakers—because it's cheap and easy to work with—the best trim on the market is actually poplar. It's a weed tree, which makes it environmentally friendly, and it doesn't off-gas. Choose lasting materials rather than what's cheapest. Third, check out your contractors *before* you hire them. Don't hire a roofer to do your plumbing or a fence guy to do your bathroom. Find specialty people."

**2: With so many contractors out there, how do you know who's the best?**

**Holmes:** "It's like a dating game: Ask 1,001 questions before you hire anyone. For example, if you're renovating your bathroom, your questions should include: How long have you specialized in bathrooms? How many sinks have you done? Hopefully they've done at least 50 to be able to learn from their mistakes. Do they have a list of references, and can you call them? Trust your instincts when you're making these decisions."

**2: What happens if a contractor messes up?**

**Holmes:** "If you hire the right guy, he won't mess up. If he does, he'll come back because his name and reputation mean everything to him. Make sure that you get your contractor back to fix any mistakes. And whatever you do, don't give him the keys to your house and then go on vacation to avoid the dust. Be there to answer questions and oversee the work."

**2: How do you avoid renovation fraud?**

**Holmes:** "If you see a van driving down the street that says 'Duct Cleaning,' and the driver rings your doorbell and says that he's in the neighbourhood and will come back tomorrow to do the work if you put \$100 down today, you should be leery. If you know who your contractors are and have enough information and references, you'll know they aren't fraudulent."

**2: What's your take on DIY renos?**

**Holmes:** "I'm not a fan. I've spent a lifetime learning what I know, and it's not easily explained. The internet is a good information resource but, like anything else, you'll find at least 10 different opinions."

**2: Are renovation standards improving as a result of your TV show?**

**Holmes:** "I think the show has created awareness with homeowners, and I think it has given a great advantage to companies who care about their work. But I still receive 1,000 emails a week from people in trouble—that's depressing."

For more info, go to [holmesonhomes.com](http://holmesonhomes.com). Or check out Mike Holmes's books *Make It Right: Straight Talk on Home Renovation From the Most Trusted Contractor in the Business* (HarperCollins Canada) and *The Holmes Inspection: Everything You Need to Know Before You Buy or Sell Your Home* (HarperCollins Canada), due out in May.

**"It's like a dating game: Ask 1,001 questions before you hire any contractor," says Holmes.**

**WHAT YOU TOLD US!**

■ 81% of 2 readers who are planning on hiring a contractor for their home reno say they're "very concerned" about hiring a reputable contractor.

■ 44% of 2 readers who are planning to renovate say it will be a DIY reno.

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