

The Pre-Drywall Checklist

Do it before the walls close.

For a short stretch of every build or renovation, the walls and ceilings are open. You can see the wood frame, the wires, the pipes, and the ducts. Then drywall (the flat panels that become your painted walls) goes up and covers all of it. Many upgrades are cheap and simple in that window and become messy, expensive repair jobs once it closes. This checklist helps you use the window well.

The work is already underway

The walls are already open and the wires and pipes are already going in. Adding one more outlet, pipe, or piece of wood is a small change to work that is happening anyway.

The crew is already on site

The electrician, plumber, and heating installer are already in your house. Nobody has to schedule a return trip just for you extra.

Cheap now, expensive later

After drywall, the same change can mean cutting holes, patching, repainting, and sometimes tearing out tile or concrete.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Walk the house with this sheet and your builder's plans. Check off each idea you want, and cross out the ones that don't fit your house. Bring the checked list to your builder as early as you can, ideally before framing starts.

★ = among the ideas we rate **most regretted when skipped**. Start with these. Within each group, the most regretted ideas come first.

Decide on plans settle it before framing **While walls are open** before insulation & drywall **Before finishes** before tile, cabinets, or landscaping lock it in

Costs are rough planning ranges in US dollars for a typical home, set on the high side on purpose. * = grows with the size of the house, floors, baths, or garage. These are not quotes. See "About the costs" at the end of the checklist.

WORDS YOU'LL HEAR

Framing	The wood skeleton of walls, floors, and roof.
Stud	One of the upright boards inside a wall.
Joist	One of the horizontal boards that hold up a floor or ceiling.
Rough-in	When the hidden wires, pipes, and ducts go in. The finished fixtures come later.
Blocking	Extra wood hidden in a wall for screws to bite into.
Conduit	An empty pipe a future wire can be pulled through.
Circuit	One electrical line from the breaker box.
Slab	A poured concrete floor. After it hardens, changes mean cutting it.
Change order	A written change to the plan, with its price.

The walk-through checklist 48 ideas, grouped by room and system

Electrical & lighting

Wires, outlets, switches, and the breaker box (the panel of switches that feeds every circuit).

- ☐ ★ **Electrical panel with room to grow** \$2.8k–\$9.5k
A breaker box with room for an electric car, an induction cooktop, a heat pump, a sauna, or whatever you don't own yet.

Decide on plans

Watch for: Big loads add up quietly. The empty slots disappear if the builder fills them with ordinary outlet lines.

- ☐ ★ **Lighting plan beyond the grid** \$3.8k–\$9.8k*
Layers of light and dimmers, instead of one recessed light in the middle of every room on one switch. **While walls are open**

Watch for: A grid of recessed lights on one switch leaves the corners dark and the dinner table glaring.

- ☐ **Extra garage power** \$1.4k–\$4.2k*
Outlets in the ceiling, power at the workbench, and more plugs than the building code requires. **While walls are open**
- ☐ **Island power** \$800–\$2.4k
Outlets on the island itself, not an outlet in the floor where people walk. **While walls are open**
- ☐ **Outlet for a bidet seat** \$400–\$1.1k
An outlet beside the toilet for a seat that washes you, where the cord can reach. **While walls are open**
- ☐ **Under-cabinet lighting** \$1.1k–\$3k
Work light under the cabinets, on its own switch, with the power box somewhere you can replace it. **While walls are open**

Internet, TV & low-voltage wiring

"Low-voltage" means the thin cables for internet, TV, cameras, and speakers.

- ☐ ★ **Internet, camera, and ceiling wiring** \$2k–\$6.2k*
Empty tubes and cables to ceiling centers, the office, and camera spots — even if you don't connect them yet. (While walls are open)
Watch for: 'We'll just use Wi-Fi' turns into a Wi-Fi box on a bookshelf and a camera wire stapled to the trim.
- ☐ ★ **A Wi-Fi point on every floor** \$2.4k–\$6.8k*
One ceiling Wi-Fi box per floor, each with its own cable back to a closet — not a pile of routers hoping the signal travels through the floor. (While walls are open)
Watch for: A router on every floor is the wrong ask. You want one router in the closet and a Wi-Fi box on each floor. Three routers means three networks, and the phones pick the bad one.
- ☐ **Wiring for an attic TV antenna** \$1.1k–\$3.4k
A TV cable from an antenna in the attic down to the TVs, grounded, so local channels don't depend on a streaming login. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Pre-wire for satellite internet** \$1.4k–\$4.8k
A weatherproof path from a roof or yard dish into the closet where the router will live — before siding and drywall hide the route. (While walls are open)

Plumbing & water

Pipes, drains, and shutoff valves that end up hidden in walls and floors.

- ☐ ★ **Basement bathroom pipes, before concrete** \$4k–\$9.8k
A drain, a vent pipe, and water lines for a future bathroom — before the concrete floor makes it a jackhammer job. (Decide on plans)
Watch for: A drain with no air pipe is not finished. If waste has to be pumped up to the sewer, that pump needs a place you can service.
- ☐ ★ **Laundry floor drain** \$1.6k–\$4.5k
A sloped, waterproof floor and a drain, for the day the washer hose fails. (While walls are open)
Watch for: Vinyl plank is not waterproof enough for a laundry room with a floor drain, and it can fail at the seams. Use tile or another fully waterproof floor.
- ☐ **Fridge water with access** \$550–\$1.4k
A water line and a shutoff you can reach without pulling the fridge in a panic. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Hot water waiting near the far bath** \$1.8k–\$4.6k
Hot water at the far bath without running the tap for a minute — on a button or a short schedule. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Garage floor drain** \$1.4k–\$4.2k
A sloped concrete floor and a drain, while the pour is still a decision. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Washer leak shutoff** \$650–\$1.9k
Automatic shutoff valves, and a pan that drains somewhere other than the ceiling below. (Before finishes)

- ☐ **Whole-home water shutoff** \$900–\$2.5k
A motorized main shutoff and a couple of sensors, where someone can actually service it. (Before finishes)

Framing & blocking

Framing is the wood skeleton of the house. Blocking is extra wood inside a wall so something heavy has a place to screw in.

- ☐ ★ **Primary closet depth** \$2.8k–\$9.5k
Make the primary closet deep enough to use — about 7 ft or more — before the walls are locked. (Decide on plans)
Watch for: A 5×6 closet cannot hold an island or two-way hanging. The rod, the door swing, and a person getting dressed all need the same few feet.
 - ☐ ★ **Extra garage depth** \$7k–\$19k
Two to four more feet so a vehicle, the door, and a bench can exist at the same time. (Decide on plans)
Watch for: Depth is measured inside, clear of the door tracks. The number on the brochure is often the outside.
 - ☐ **Mudroom drop zone** \$3.2k–\$9k
Lockers, a bench, and outlets where bags and boots actually land. (While walls are open)
 - ☐ **Solid backing in the garage walls** \$500–\$1.6k
Extra wood in the walls so cabinets and tool panels have something solid to screw into. (While walls are open)
 - ☐ **Recessed fridge cavity** \$500–\$3.5k
Frame a niche into the wall behind the fridge so a standard-depth fridge sits flush with the cabinets. (While walls are open)
 - ☐ **Attic deck, light, and stairs** \$1.6k–\$4.5k
A floored patch of attic, a light on a switch, and safe access — storage you can actually use. (Decide on plans)
- ## Heating, cooling & fresh air
- HVAC: the furnace or heat pump, the air conditioner, the ducts, and the fans.
- ☐ ★ **Bathroom fans vented outside** \$750–\$1.8k*
A fan sized for the room, on a timer or a humidity sensor, with a duct that goes outdoors — not into the attic. (While walls are open)
Watch for: Sending the fan into the attic is how the underside of the roof grows mold.
 - ☐ ★ **An air path for every bedroom** \$2.6k–\$6.2k*
A way for air to leave each bedroom when the door is closed, so the room doesn't get stuffy. (While walls are open)
Watch for: A big gap under the door is not a real air path. The door slams, the room gets stuffy, and the filter loads up.
 - ☐ **Fresh-air ventilator** \$3.6k–\$8.2k
Controlled fresh air for a tight house, with a filter you can stand and reach. (Decide on plans)
 - ☐ **Comfort for a room over the garage** \$4.5k–\$10.5k
Real heating, cooling, and insulation for a bedroom or bonus room sitting on top of the garage. (While walls are open)

Insulation, air sealing & sound

What goes inside the walls just before drywall. Last chance to get it right.

- ☐ ★ **Seal the wall tops at the attic** \$2.8k–\$7.5k*
Seal the gaps where wires and pipes enter the attic, before insulation covers them. (While walls are open)
Watch for: Insulation sitting on a leaky wall top does not make a tight house.
- ☐ ★ **Basement moisture control** \$5.5k–\$15k
A water plan — drainage, a pump in a pit, and walls that can dry — before any finish goes up. (While walls are open)
Watch for: Fluffy insulation against the concrete, with plastic sheeting on the room side, is a mold recipe.
- ☐ **Sound control before drywall** \$2k–\$6k*
Dense insulation and sealed electrical boxes where you want quiet: baths, laundry, the furnace room, and the main bedroom. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Solid bedroom and bath doors** \$1.5k–\$3.8k
Solid doors, not hollow ones, where privacy matters. Order them with the rest of the doors. (Before finishes)

Exterior & outdoor

Outside work that gets locked in by siding, concrete, or landscaping.

- ☐ ★ **Basement escape window** \$5.2k–\$12k
A basement window a person can climb out of, and a window well that drains, if anyone might sleep down there.
(Decide on plans)
Watch for: A big window is not automatically an escape window. Size, how low the sill is, and a well a person can climb out of are the rules.
- ☐ **Freeze-resistant outdoor faucets** \$900–\$2.4k
Outdoor faucets at the front, back, and garage, each with a shutoff inside the house. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Downspouts away from the house** \$2k–\$7k
Get roof water well away from the foundation before the landscaping locks it in place. (Before finishes)
- ☐ **Switched soffit outlets for holiday lights** \$300–\$1k
Weatherproof outlets in the underside of the eaves near the gutters, on a switch inside the house, for holiday or permanent eave lights. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Gas line for a grill** \$1.2k–\$3.2k
A shutoff and a short, tested gas pipe where the grill will live, before the patio is poured. (While walls are open)

Kitchen, bath & wellness

Rooms where pipes, power, and waterproofing meet.

- ☐ ★ **Step-free shower** \$4.2k–\$9.8k
A shower with little or no lip to step over. The whole bathroom floor becomes part of the waterproofing. (Decide on plans)
Watch for: No lip to step over means the entire bathroom floor is waterproofed and sloped, not just the shower floor.

- ☐ **Heated bathroom floors** \$2.4k–\$6.2k
Electric floor heat under tile, with its own electrical line and a thermostat you can reach. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Shower shelf and a bench** \$550–\$1.6k
A waterproof shelf and wood for a bench, built as part of the shower — not a shelf stuck on after. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Extra shower heads, piped now** \$2.6k–\$7.2k
A rain shower, a handheld sprayer, and a valve — with a water heater and pipes that can keep up. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Cabinets to the ceiling** \$2.8k–\$9.8k
Upper cabinets that reach the ceiling, instead of a drywall box built down to hide short ones. (Decide on plans)
- ☐ **Pantry pull-outs** \$1.1k–\$3.2k
Drawers and door racks specified with the cabinets, not squeezed in after. (Decide on plans)
- ☐ **Sauna** \$9k–\$24k
An indoor electric sauna with its own electrical line and a fan that is not just cracking the door. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Cold-plunge pipes and power** \$2.4k–\$7k
A drain, a water line, a shock-safe outlet, and a floor that can hold the weight. The tub can come later. (While walls are open)

Future-proofing & accessibility

Cheap now, for the car, the body, or the owner you'll be in ten years.

- ☐ ★ **Hidden backing for grab bars** \$350–\$900
Plywood in the bathing walls now, so a grab bar later is a screw, not a remodel. (While walls are open)
Watch for: Blocking only helps if it is beside and behind the toilet and in the shower, at heights a person actually grabs.
- ☐ **Wider main-level doors** \$900–\$3.8k
32 to 36 inch doors on the main living level, chosen before the walls are framed. (Decide on plans)
- ☐ **Electric car charger wiring** \$2k–\$5.2k
A heavy electrical line and a wall-mounted charger, in a spot the cord can actually reach. (While walls are open)
- ☐ **Empty pipe under the driveway** \$600–\$1.8k
An empty pipe under the drive or walk before concrete, for a future gate, lights, or yard outlet. (Decide on plans)

Lower priority, still worth a thought: Adjustable closet system; Garage floor coating; Wall faucet over the stove; Laundry chute; Whole-house humidifier; Levers and rocker switches. Most of these can be added later without opening walls.

About the costs in this checklist

The dollar figures are **planning ranges, not bids**. They are rough US numbers for a typical home, set on the high side on purpose so you are not surprised. Your real price depends on where you live, your house, your builder, and the products you choose, and some items grow with the size of the home. Building rules also vary by town. Use these numbers to decide what to ask about, then get the actual scope, code requirements, and price from your builder in writing.

Photograph and film every wall and ceiling

It is free, it takes about twenty minutes, and it may be the most useful thing on this list. Once drywall is up, you can't see what is inside your walls. A labeled record shows where the wires, pipes, and wood are for as long as you own the house: when you hang a heavy TV, add an outlet, chase a leak, or finish a basement.

When to shoot. Ask your builder for the schedule; the window can be a day or two. **First pass:** after the rough-in inspections pass and before insulation, so you capture the final layout. **Second pass:** after insulation, right before drywall.

Mini how-to

1. **Mark first.** Use painter's tape or a marker on the floor to mark studs and key runs, like "water line here."
2. **Start the video and talk.** Say the date and the room. Narrate each wall: "Kitchen, north wall, left to right."
3. **Walk slowly.** Slower than feels natural. Fast footage blurs.
4. **Keep a tape measure in the frame** so you can read distances from the floor and corners later.
5. **Take stills too.** One straight-on photo of each wall, then close-ups of boxes, valves, and anything unusual.
6. **Do the ceilings.** Tilt up, pan slowly, and say where you are.
7. **Sketch the floor plan** on paper, mark the panel, shutoffs, and main runs, and photograph it.
8. **Back it up the same day** to cloud storage, share the folder with your partner and builder, and keep a copy on a computer.

Phone tips: turn on every light and bring a work light, use the regular lens (wide lenses bend lines), HD is fine, hold the phone sideways with both hands, wipe the dust off the lens. Name files so they sort, like 2026-10-15 kitchen north wall .

SHOT LIST

- ☐ Rough-in inspections passed (ask before you shoot)
- ☐ Studs and key runs marked on the floor
- ☐ Every wall, floor to ceiling, in every room, closet, and the garage
- ☐ Every ceiling: joists, ducts, pipes, wiring
- ☐ Breaker panel and its labels
- ☐ Junction boxes, the small boxes where wires join
- ☐ Water shutoffs, water heater, where pipes enter the house
- ☐ Gas lines and the gas shutoff
- ☐ Ducts and vents: heating, cooling, bath fans, range hood
- ☐ Blocking, empty conduit, network and speaker cable
- ☐ Floor plan sketch photographed
- ☐ Second pass after insulation
- ☐ Files named, backed up, and shared

Common mistakes: shooting before inspections and the layout changes; filming too fast with no labels; forgetting ceilings; no tape measure in view; leaving files only on the phone; showing up unannounced. Ask your builder when it's safe to visit. Full guide: pre-drywall.com/guides/photograph-your-walls.html

Questions to ask your builder

1. **When is rough-in, the inspection, insulation, and drywall?**
How many days will the walls be open, and when can I walk through?
2. **What is the last day to make changes, and how are changes priced?**
Can I get every change in writing as a change order before the work is done?
3. **Can I walk through with you before insulation?**
I'd like to check outlet, switch, and light locations against my list.
4. **How many empty spaces will the breaker panel have when you're done?**
Is there room for a car charger, induction cooktop, or heat pump later?
5. **Where will internet come into the house, and where will the router live?**
Can cables from each floor run back to that spot?
6. **Where does wood blocking go?**
Behind the TV, grab bars, shelves, and heavy cabinets?
7. **Do the bath fans and range hood vent all the way outside?**
Where does each duct end?
8. **How does air get out of each bedroom when the door is closed?**
9. **Where are the water shutoffs?**
The main, the fridge, the washer, and each outdoor faucet. Can I reach them?
10. **How is the shower, laundry room, and basement kept dry?**
What is the waterproofing plan?
11. **Is any of this limited by local code, a permit, or my lot?**
Which items need an inspector's sign-off?
12. **Can I get the final wiring and plumbing layout?**
With any changes marked, for my house records.

Do it before the walls close. · Plan yours free at pre-drywall.com