

# Seven deadly sins of bathroom design

By Majka Kaiser



**RIGHT:** Don't undermine an expensive material with a botch DIY job or hiring an unskilled tile setter.

**BELOW:** Hiring a competent project manager is a wise idea for bathroom renovations, which requires organising logistics between numerous contractors.

Imagining our ultimate bathroom is what daydreams are made of. However, designing bathrooms can be present challenges even for the most experienced of professional interior designers and architects. So before you embark on the process, be sure to read our checklist of seven deadly sins before you fall into the often costly traps many have committed before you.

## 1 Only fools rush in

Once you've made the decision to tackle a bathroom renovation project, you're probably dying to get the ball rolling. Before you start sprinting before you can crawl, it pays to do the important groundwork necessary in the initial stages. Poor planning often results in expensive mistakes and delays from having to find out the hard way when something doesn't work further down the line.

Design experts suggest, depending on the size and scope of your bath project, that you ought to spend several weeks to a few months on the planning process. Don't despair though, as this process can be lots of fun too. Create a mood board of images either collected from magazines or create a Pinterest account where you can begin to see patterns emerging of what style, finishes and products you gravitate towards.

As you begin to plan where certain elements are to be positioned, keep the major plumbing lines in mind. Relocating things like the toilet from one wall to another, for example, can potentially cost thousands of dollars and this money may be better spent on other luxuries you can actually benefit from.

## 2 Labour day

If you're not afraid of getting your hands dirty, helping out with certain aspects of a renovation can be a great way to cut costs, but make sure this isn't at the expense of realising a professional finish. Focus your energies on the manual labour side of things like ripping out your old bathtub or painting. Like enlisting a professional for the more complicated installations and treatments a skilled tiler, for example, can make all the difference.

Given how many trades are required for a typical bathroom remodel including plumbers, electricians, tile setters, cabinet installers and more, it pays to find a top-notch project manager. Meet with at least three contractors, preferably those you find through personal recommendations, before making your choice. Make sure the person you hire has an up-to-date license and insurance, and scrutinise the contract; it should list every product down to the model number and finish.

## 3 Material world

Be sure not to scrimp and save on items that get the most hammering. Invest in quality materials you can afford and spend on lifetime warranties the cover leaks and stains. Learn about the properties of different materials to better understand how your particular lifestyle and design could benefit or be compromised by using certain materials.

Look to save in areas such as light fixtures, unless you particularly desire a feature pendant for high impact. If you're just after practical lighting fixtures, they

generally perform the same across most price points. Choosing a basic finish on faucets and fixtures can save hundreds of dollars without compromising quality.

## 4 Look to the future

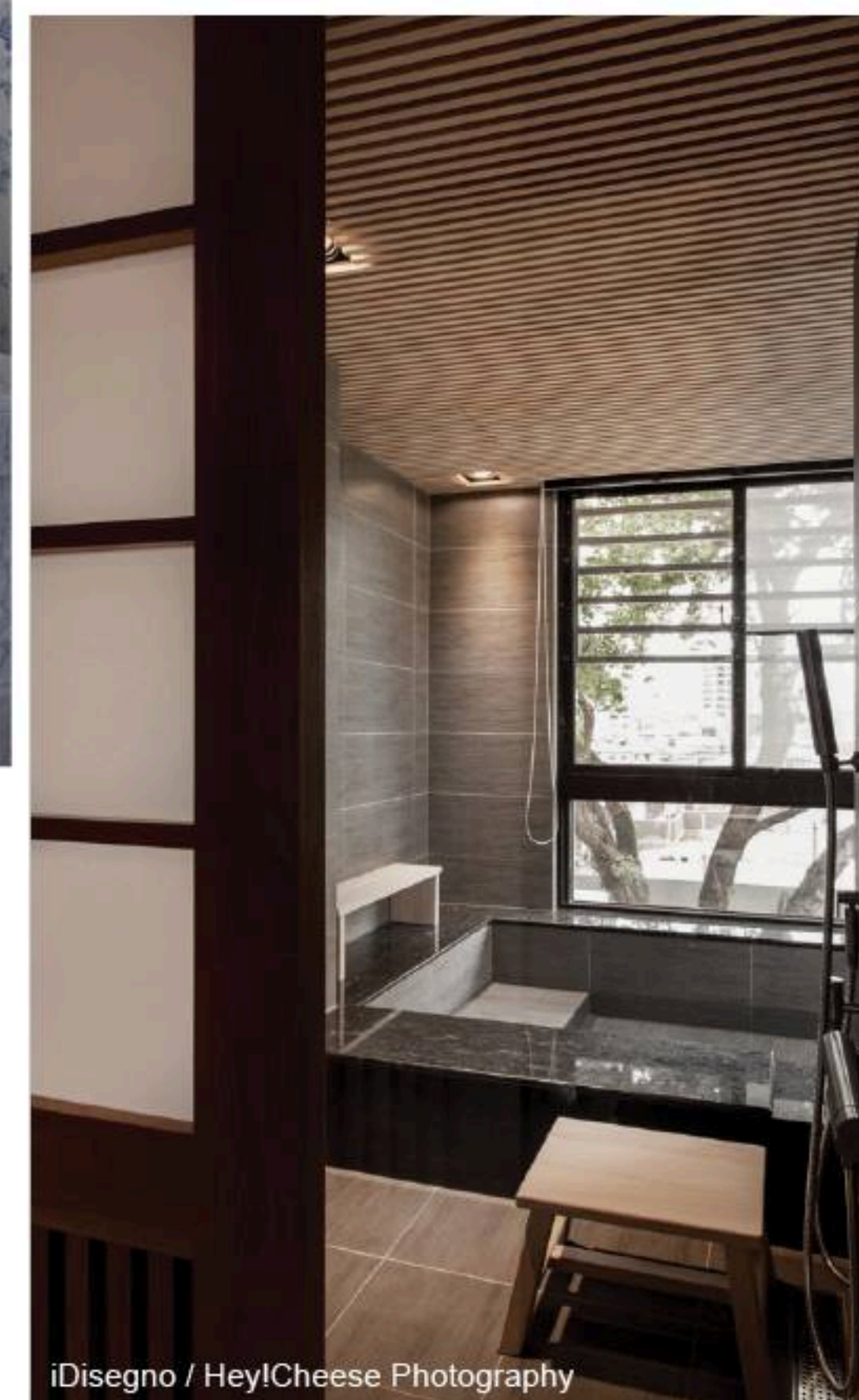
Although you may be in your prime of health now, many people are factoring their golden years into bathroom design. With ageing, there are issues that often arise such as restricted mobility. Consider larger showering areas, adding a built-in seat (also very useful for propping up a foot on for shaving your legs too) and doing away with shower trays to provide easy access.

'Comfort-height' toilets, which are easier to get on and off of, are now just as common as standard-height models. Even grab bars have seen design improvements; many now have matching towel bars and other accessories. Not just for the elderly, grab bars make it easier for pregnant women or young children to get in and out of the bath.

Even if you don't incorporate every element of universal design into the bathroom now, it's worth putting in the structural framework, such as blocking in the walls for future support bars. Make sure your contractor makes a drawing of the wall so that you can find the blocking if, and when, the time comes.

## 5 Water works

Bathroom fixtures have become more water-efficient, but if you hanker for 'his and hers' double showerheads or multi-jet showers, your water and energy bills are likely to increase. You may also need to examine your bathroom's existing drain



and plumbing lines, as they may require an upgrade - as well as water heaters - to accommodate your preferred shower, which can add hundreds, if not thousands, to your project.

## 6 Beware of online buys

While the internet provides a wealth of information to assist with researching various products and materials, it's highly recommended to see them in person. There's nothing like touching different textures and seeing colours in the showroom, which often differ vastly to what you see on your computer screen.

## 7 Storage space

Keep regularly used items close at hand with storage either in vanity drawers and cupboards, in wall-hung or floor-mounted cabinets, or better still, add integrated hidden storage cupboards in wall recesses.

Medicine cabinets with mirrors are a great option if you're looking to save space. Clever storage solutions help you keep your bathroom an oasis of calm and relaxation, while making life easier to locate essential items. (Visit p. 8 for storage suggestions to keep your bathroom organised).