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(designonline)

Producer Mario López-Cordero

## ask betsy

Betsy Franklin, home services expert and editor of decorating bible *The Franklin Report*, tips off *HB* readers first

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*I want to renovate my bathroom. What should I look for in a contractor?*

DETERMINE HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN FIT IN YOUR BATHROOM at one time: six or more different specialists—a plumber, electrician, tiler and grouter, plasterer and painter, carpenter, and air-conditioning and heating technician—are needed for the average renovation. Contractors need to leverage their time to make a profit, so it may be best to hire one to redo several bathrooms or the kitchen as well. Don't be swayed by contractors who "specialize" in bathrooms: they are often less established and less capitalized than top-notch, all-purpose contractors who find smaller projects unprofitable. Keep in mind that a bath renovation can be as time-consuming as building an addition to your home. If your budget is tight, look for smaller firms that are on the rise, with experience and references, but remember that short-term savings can sometimes cause long-term disasters: just last year I had to rip apart half of my two-year-old bathroom because a cheap lead shower tray leaked water into a doctor's waiting room on the floor below.

E-mail your home improvement or renovation questions to [hbquestions@hearst.com](mailto:hbquestions@hearst.com) or mail them to Ask Betsy, *House Beautiful*, 1700 Broadway, 29th floor, New York, NY 10019. Log on to [www.franklin-report.com](http://www.franklin-report.com) for home improvement resources at the click of a button.

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