



## Kitchen Design Seminar (Part 2): Think Spatially

In Part 1 we reviewed items and features that you needed to identify BEFORE you spoke to designers and contractors about remodeling.

1. **Method(s) of Cooking** - Stove/range, cooktop + wall ovens. Extra oven?
2. **Provide A List of Major Appliances** you plan to have:
3. **Types of In-Kitchen Eating** - Table seating for #? Island/Peninsula seating?
4. **Island or Peninsula** - Do you desire one of these in the new kitchen?
5. **Cabinet Information** - Wood/Finish/Style/Type
6. **Types and number of sinks** - Single/double basin? Style? Material? Use?
7. **Countertop Material Preference?**
8. **Floor Material Preference?**

When you (or your architect/kitchen designer) start to contemplate your new kitchen design, many of those prior items (4 ½ of them) affect your kitchen layouts. I'll explain what these things are and why they are important in a minute.

ALWAYS start with a few simple assessments about the room the kitchen occupies first.

1. **Doorways (and doors)** - these define how the traffic moves in the room. Mess with the traffic flow and you can screw up the function of a kitchen.
2. **Windows** - enlarging them and leaving them in place is simple. You arrange the new layout with them in mind. MOVING THEM or making them SMALLER is very costly and should be avoided. Closing them is slightly less costly than moving/smaller and should also be avoided.  
FACT - Windows allow light and ventilation, and steal wall cabinet space. Balance those values wisely.
3. **Walls** - Are they open to adjacent areas so the kitchen can expand? Are they being removed to expand the kitchen into a new area? Are they remaining and the new kitchen has to work in the same basic room as before?

This set of information tells me A LOT about what can and cannot happen in the space before I ever hear about what your needs and wants are.

Many things that homeowners are interested in for their kitchen remodels are very easy to deliver in a kitchen (like roll-out trays in cabinets) and the 3 key items just mentioned have no bearing on those.

But tables & chairs, Islands and pantries are an entirely different matter.

I call such things "Space Hogs" for very obvious reasons. Obviously, they do take up a lot of space in the kitchen. But they also require clear areas around them to use them properly or to walk by them without people running into them and into each other.



### **Kitchen SPACE HOGS:**

1. **Tables & Chairs** - nothing takes more floor space out of a kitchen than this. It's the VERY FIRST THING that needs to be placed as a result.
2. **Islands** - the 2nd biggest space user in any kitchen and the 2nd item that needs to be placed.
3. **Peninsulas** (attached islands) - 3rd largest floor space hogs.
4. **Pantry Closets**
5. **Refrigerators & Freezers**
6. **Oversized ranges & cooktops** (and hoods) - oven type also (cooktop + wall ovens especially)
7. **WALKWAYS**

Most kitchen related features other than these will fit easily. Things like the countertop material and level or the quality of cabinets affect the COST greatly, but do not affect the design and layout at all. Neither will flooring type, paint color, or lighting. So most of the things you are most concerned with pertain to the LOOK of your finished kitchen, but really are not even considered when designing the new layout for the kitchen.

Most of the SPACE HOGS only need to be understood in terms of HOW MUCH space they take up or they require. It's usually a cut and dried answer whether the table and chairs or Island even fit in a kitchen.

I understand that almost everyone who remodels a kitchen wants an island - but in most pre-1990 homes islands simply don't fit in the original space allotted to the kitchen unless a table is removed or a wall is removed expanding the kitchen. A 10, 11, or 12 foot wide kitchen cannot have a large island with seating. It just does not fit. Nobody wants to hear this, but if you want a kitchen that truly functions and offers convenience each and every day - drop the island if you have a 'small' room.

This is because in addition to the space they physically take up, they take up EXTRA space around all 4 sides for sitting, standing, and walking. You see - all cabinets, islands, peninsulas and tables require that you leave at least 24" of clear floor space for work areas in front of and next to them. And if you park two such items near one another - they BOTH require that 24", meaning you can only place them within 48" of one another. This allows proper functioning and also enough space for two adults to work, walk and pass safely between the two Space Hog obstacles.

The reason for the 24" is the side of an adult human. An average adult male is about 20 1/2" across, shoulder to shoulder. Given an inch or two either side not to rub against anything results in 24" of space to stand and walk. If you design a kitchen for more than one person, BOTH users need 24" of space, thus the 48" spacing I suggest. If you try and squeeze that number below 45", conflict ensues. When an oven or dishwasher is open, the second person may not be able to easily pass by. Of if there are two or more people working in the kitchen, then working and passing room is at a premium. So never place cabinets, islands, peninsulas, tables and walls closer than 45" to one another in your kitchen.

Homebuilders, shady remodelers, and untrained or sloopy designers, will let you place such objects as close as 36". But then comfortable work and circulation is eliminated any time that more than one person is in the kitchen, or any appliance is opened: oven/dishwasher/refrigerator. And a second cook? Forget about it. Kids? No way. You CANNOT place cabinets, tables, walls, islands closer to one another than 45" and have a fully functional kitchen. If you do, you will regret it for many years. And there's no point investing \$40k or \$50k and still having regrets.

So consider the Space Hogs and the space available and GET RID of the ones you don't absolutely need. Can you eat at the island or peninsula and not at a table? Or eat at the table in an



adjacent area, not inside the kitchen? Can you have an island or peninsula without seating? Can you have a pantry CABINET instead of a walk-in or reach-in pantry? Can you use a conventional range instead of cooktop and wall ovens? All these things save SPACE and allow you to get more total stuff into your new kitchen layout.

I understand these are HARD decisions since you have WANTED ***“that thing”*** for several years. I’m not saying “no”, I’m saying it comes with a hefty price - not \$\$\$\$ , but in what else it displaces out of the project.

Refrigerators often require even more space between their front surface and the next item. It’s based on the size of their doors. If their doors open more than 20” (like a single door Ref/Frz), then they will need ADDITIONAL inches in front of them. Double door and French door models fit fine with the 45-48” spacing, but single door models need an extra 10-12” clearance. Otherwise opening the door stops traffic cold. Pun intended.

So, when it is time to start thinking about your next kitchen layout, consider how much space you have to use, then go down your personal list of Space Hogs and make the hard decisions ahead of time about what really fits and what doesn’t. If you’re honest with yourself and you don’t force your designer/remodeler to break these spacing guidelines, then you’ll end up MUCH HAPPIER with the overall function of your new kitchen.

Cramming something in may seem OK now, but it will not be over the next 20 to 30 years of your kitchen’s life.

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