

## Think Twice When Remodeling an Old House

It's human nature to crave the innovative, the new and the trendy # and that rule applies to remodeling as much as anything else.

The search for the mythical updated look of magazine lore has long tempted both owners and architects to implant trendy additions onto older homes just to make them ever-so-briefly fashionable again.

Alas, you need only to flip through a 20-year-old copy of Better Homes and Gardens to see how such updates have stood the test of time. Most would inspire groans, if not laughter. The lesson is clear: Given the ever-shifting sands of architectural taste, the only kind of addition that'll be perpetually in fashion is one that respects the original architecture.

But how to accomplish this? It should go without saying that the overall proportions of any new addition: wall heights, window styles and sizes, and the roof style and finish, should complement the original building.

Beyond these fundamentals, however, the real trick is to identify and repeat the designer's signature details. By going through these characteristic traits, and every house, new or old, has a whole load of them, you can pretty much make any addition look spot-on original.

Typical features include:

- \* Attic vents
- \* Porch railings and columns
- \* Window muntins
- \* Roof edges

Last, if you have problems coming up with a detail that has no direct precedent on the existing building, ask yourself: What would the original designer have done? Would he have opted for paired French doors or a sleek aluminum slider? Would he design the chimney to be skinny, stout or asymmetrical?

To put it briefly, what would his or her own signature detail have been? With the original designer as your guide, your addition can't help but fit. Keep this in mind for all home improvements, and you cannot go too far wrong.