
The Ultimate Shower Kit Replacement Guide

Clear advice on bringing your bathroom to the next level



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Get Smart

13 Shower Replacement Mistakes and How to Avoid Them



Who wouldn't LOVE to save money on a lower cost shower replacement kit? Unless you've got an Elon Musk or Bill Gates budget, you need to watch what you spend.

And when you're looking to replace your shower stall or convert from a tub to a shower, and you start 'letting your fingers do the walking' (OK—not through the yellow pages, but certainly on your keyboard), you find so many options. It's overwhelming.

However, one thing becomes painfully obvious. Many of the shower kits you've researched are NO BETTER than the cheap plastic shower (or high-maintenance tile shower) you're looking to get rid of today. And you may be asking yourself this question....

Why should I replace one cheap plastic shower (or high maintenance tile shower) with another cheap plastic shower or another (pain in the rear to maintain) tile shower?

You want to upgrade your shower. You don't want to deal with the pains of the past. And you don't want to overpay to make this happen. The challenge becomes how you can avoid repeating the problems of bad showers of the past with a new (and upgraded) shower kit you're looking to buy today?

My goal is to help you do just that. I'll identify 13 problems with cheap replacement shower kits you'll find most often on the internet. Then I'll give you practical solutions to make sure issues with these low-cost kits don't become YOUR PROBLEMS. In addition, you'll learn about higher-quality shower kits to get the low maintenance, high-style bathroom you've dreamed of!

I'll break the problems into 4 categories

- Shower pan problems
- Shower wall panel problems
- Shower glass problems
- General shower kit problems

OK—let's go.

Shower Pan Problems to Avoid in Your Replacement Kit

1 The drain is on the wrong side

THE PROBLEM There's nothing worse than getting mentally ready to do a home improvement project and find out at step #1 you've ALREADY made a big mistake—like NOT paying attention to what side the drain is on. You see when you get the typical flanged shower pan which comes with low-cost shower kits the base has flanges built into the sides. With popular sizes (like 60" x 30" and 60" x 32") the drain will be on the left- or right-hand side.

They're designed for bathtub-to-shower conversions with side drains so you save money and don't need to move your plumbing. If you get a flanged pan with a left-hand drain but need the hole on the right side, you have a problem which CANNOT be fixed without returning the base (and eating the shipping and restock fees). OUCH!

THE SOLUTION The answer to this dilemma is to buy a shower kit with a reversible shower pan. And if you're not sure what a reversible pan is, it's simply a pan with curbs on all 4 sides of the base where the flanges are added at the job site. With these pans you can shift the drain hole to either side.



Here's an example of a stylish reversible low profile solid surface pan.

2

The base is wafer-thin

THE PROBLEM When you step in a shower pan of a budget shower kit and feel it flex and squeak, you know it's a bad sign. It's at this moment you know why this shower kit was so cheap—it's wafer-thin. And thin shower pans are more likely to crack than thicker shower bases. And since the pan is the foundation of your shower, you know if it fails you've got BIG PROBLEMS because the walls above it will likely need to be replaced as well.

THE SOLUTION Whether you're buying an acrylic shower pan or a solid surface shower base there ARE sturdy options. However, if I'm keepin' it real (as Randy Jackson from *American Idol* used to say), expect to pay more for better choices. If you want a lower cost yet good quality pan, look for acrylic bases with a reinforced design like the base you'll see below. It's supported by MDF (multi-density fiberboard), giving it more rigidity. And if you really want to 'notch up' your base game, go with a modern low profile solid surface shower pan like the one above. It's unbelievably stylish. It's ultra-sturdy. It's uber-safe.



3

The curb height is too high

THE PROBLEM You didn't expect Dad's health to go downhill. His mobility is headed in the wrong direction, FAST! The standard 5" high shower curb with the fiberglass shower pan you installed two years ago is an accident waiting to happen. You know something needs to be done. Now what?

THE SOLUTION One important detail not everyone considers when buying a shower pan is how tall the curb is you'll step over. And when it comes to curb heights and safety, the shorter the curb the better. In the image to the right, you'll see a low threshold 3" curb in this acrylic shower pan and a very low profile 1 1/6" high curb in this modern solid surface shower pan. When in doubt – go with a lower curb pan.



Shower Wall Panel Problems to Avoid in Your Replacement Kit

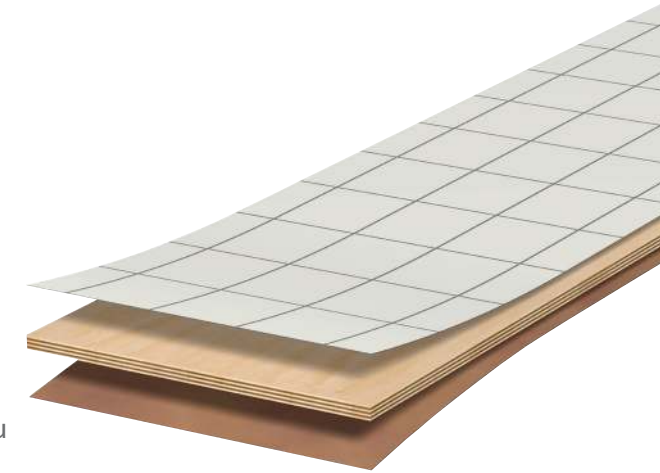
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The wall panels are flimsy

THE PROBLEM When you started researching wall panels for your shower replacement kit, they looked so nice ... online. Then after you bought them and cracked open the box, you saw how flimsy they truly are. You shouted, "Oh, shucks!" (OK, these weren't the exact words you used, but gotta keep things family-friendly).

Wafer-thin 1/8" 'thick' shower walls are NOT the quality you want. You're wondering how this is an improvement over the 'builders' grade' (which you don't say in an affectionate way) one piece fiberglass shower you're replacing?

THE SOLUTION Choose a shower kit with wall panels which are as thick as tile or stone. One example is 3/8" thick laminate shower wall panels. This uber-popular product in Europe is growing like wildfire in the United States. The panels click, lock and seal together (like laminate flooring), AND you get a lifetime warranty (which beats the pants off the short warranty of thin wall panels or the non-existent warranty you get with a tile shower).

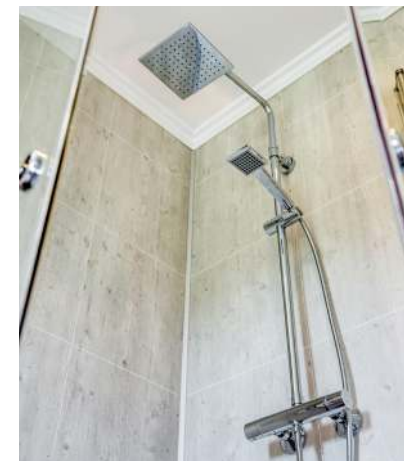


5

The shower panels don't go to the ceiling

THE PROBLEM You hate, hate, hate the peeling paint and mold above your existing fiberglass shower surround or tile shower. You want a maintenance-free shower for God's sake. And when you look at the shower kits on the market, they all cheap out with shower wall panels which are 72" or 76" tall. This leaves 20" to 24" above the panels you get (and I don't mean this in a flattering way) the 'opportunity' to maintain.

THE SOLUTION Insist on a shower wall panel kit which reaches the top of your standard 8' high bathroom ceiling. This can be accomplished with 96" high DIY PVC shower panels or 94.4" high laminate shower wall panels. Don't be fooled by cheap fiberglass or acrylic imitations.



6 The shower panels look FAKE AND BORING!

THE PROBLEM The wall panels in the pics on the Internet looked pretty good. Then you unpackaged your shower kit. You WERE NOT pleasantly surprised. You knew immediately no one would think this molded white acrylic wall panel would make ANYONE think it's real tile (unless real tile is reincarnated to become white, plasticky and molded).

THE SOLUTION You want shower wall panels which are thick, stylish, and don't look fake. But where can you find them? Here are two fun options:

- **Laminate shower wall panels** These 3/8" thick panels click and lock together like laminate flooring and are mechanically fastened to stay in place (they're not glued up). They have faux grout joints which are indented and look just like tile, or you can get an organic modern minimalist pattern like the cracked cement shower panels seen below.
- **PVC shower wall panels** These panels are 1/4" thick and are a digital replica of many uber-expensive marble and granite patterns. They're very easy to install.



Shower Glass Door Problems to Avoid in Your Replacement Kit

7 Doors which wobble to and fro

THE PROBLEM Just like you judge the quality of a car or SUV by shutting its doors, you can also feel the quality (or lack thereof) of a shower kit by how the doors feel when they're opened or closed. The way many retailers cut corners on shower kits is using 3/16" or 1/4" 'thick' (and yes – this word does belong in quotation marks) glass doors with frames around them. You can feel the door wobble when you operate them.

THE SOLUTION The simple way to fix this problem is to use heavy glass shower doors. Sure – 3/8" thick doors are more expensive, but if you want a door which won't feel like it'll come off its rails any moment now, insist on a better quality shower door.



8 Your chrome shower door frame has more spots than a Dalmatian

THE PROBLEM Who doesn't love a Dalmatian with its funny mix of black spots? And while spots on a Dalmatian are adorable, water spots on a chrome shower door are A PAIN IN THE REAR (especially if you're the OCD person who gets to clean them)!

You may be asking why cheap shower kits use chrome finish doors which are spot-magnets, the answer is simple: chrome is cheap. The good news is there's a smarter way which matches perfectly with today's most popular hardware finish.

THE SOLUTION Instead of a chrome sliding, pivot or bypass shower door make sure your higher-quality shower kit uses a brush nickel finish. It won't show the spots. It'll match also go with popular brushed nickel handles and knobs on your vanity and interior doors.



9 You're constantly bumping your head on the shower door frame when trying to move into and out of the shower

THE PROBLEM You loved being 6'2" in high school. You were the star on your basketball or volleyball team. However, now that your glory days are in your rearview mirror (and you've gained a few gray hairs and don't run as fast ... oops, sorry to depress you) you've seen how being tall can be a big disadvantage as a homeowner. You wish you could 'only' count on one hand the number of times you've bumped your head while attempting to duck under the rail of your sliding glass shower door.

THE SOLUTION One of the hidden problems you might not notice when buying a low-cost shower kit is they're cheaper BECAUSE they use shorter parts. Shorter wall panels AND shorter (72" high) shower glass doors. If you're tall, these short doors are a pain which keeps on giving UNLESS you pay attention to the height of the shower glass door. Look for sliding or bypass glass doors which are 79" high or taller and stop 'seeing stars' after running into your shower door framing.

10 The bottom track of your sliding glass shower door is a pain to clean!

THE PROBLEM You've hated cleaning the bottom track of your sliding glass door. Scraping out hair, scum, and mold from the shower door track is not a task you'd wish on your worst enemy. So, imagine your dismay when you see the evil bottom track has come back AGAIN in your new low budget shower kit! Ouch!

THE SOLUTION Most framed sliding and bypass glass shower doors have U-shaped tracks at the bottom which are a chore to clean. To not put yourself through this hassle again, insist on a frameless glass sliding door. It eliminates the track you love to hate at the bottom.



General Shower Kit Problems

11 The advertised shower kit is not actually a full kit

THE PROBLEM The price for the shower kit seemed too good to be true. And when you read the fine print you saw the low, low price of \$995 was only for the 1/8" thin prefabricated fiberglass shower wall panels and the flimsy shower pan. It wasn't a complete kit. It was a sale with 'items sold separately.' And it wasn't even a quality product.

THE SOLUTION Make sure you're getting a complete shower kit, not just a component or two. A complete kit includes shower wall panels, a shower base and glass shower door. If the system doesn't include all three elements, it's not a kit, it's a component.

12 Your CSR (Customer Service Rep) knows less than Sergeant Shultz from *Hogan's Heroes*

THE PROBLEM So, you couldn't for the life of you figure out where to install the wall panels in relation to the shower pan. You didn't know if you should install the wall panels first, then put in the pan, or vice versa. You tried calling your "CSR" (er Custom Service Rep). When you finally got through to 'Mary T.' (not her real name) it was painfully obvious she knew less than Sergeant Shultz from *Hogan's Heroes* (and for those of you not old enough to know this reference, [watch the "I Know Nothing" video](#)).

Let's face it. When you buy from an Internet retailer who sells over 10,000 items, what's the chance the person who takes your order will have ANY IDEA how to guide you through the challenges of installing your shower? If you said *fat chance*, you're the lucky winner! The question becomes how can you make sure you'll get the support you need?

THE SOLUTION Making sure you're not a 'lack of after-sales support' victim isn't easy. You want to buy from someone who not only wholesales shower products, but also employs technical shower specialists who are knowledgeable about every element of a shower kit – the shower pan, the shower glass doors and the shower wall panels). Ask your rep if they have team members who know the ins and outs of installing these products. Ask how you would reach this person. Would the CSR be willing to give you the technical reps cell number?

While it may be tempting to buy the cheapest shower kit you can find from a cut-rate Internet retailer, you'll often find technical support lacking (or non-existent). Check review sites to get a feel of what post-sales service looks like. As The Who would say..." Don't be fooled again!"

13 Warranties are short and 'slippery'

THE PROBLEM Four years ago you bought a brand-new shower kit. Today, you woke up and find it leaking onto your spouse's new wood dining room table. Water came through the shower pan in the second-floor bathroom. You pull out your receipt. You're 'a 'hopin and 'a-wishin' your warranty will at least cover the cost of new materials. You see you have a 5-year warranty and think, 'so far, so good.'

You call the Internet supplier. They start by asking who installed the shower pan. You say—in a worried tone—I did. Then they inform you your warranty is ONLY VALID IF it's installed by a professional plumber. You're livid. You start throwing up words even Old Man Parker from a Christmas Story would be embarrassed to say!

You 'escalate' the problem. Then some snotty supervisor tells you that's the company policy (oh and how you love to hear 'company policy' – 'er NOT!) She goes on to say they will sell you another base if you'd like, although lead times are 2 months out. You're thinking ... thanks, but no thanks. Wow, this IS NOT turning out to be a good day!

THE SOLUTION When you buy a shower kit look for companies who offer warranties at least 10 years long. Make sure they'll replace the product no matter who installs them. Don't get burned with 'company policy' and 'warranty loopholes' because you didn't do your homework.

Go Shopping

How to Compare Shower Replacement Kits



You never knew replacing your existing fiberglass or tile shower (or tub/shower combo) in your bathroom alcove could be so tough until you started researching your options.

You found shower replacement kit prices are all over the board. You found it difficult to do a 'side by side' comparison of shower kits you thought looked interesting. And you've found the time it'll take to get your new shower delivered to your home is so long – with supply chain issues being what they are. How in the world can you compare shower replacement kits and make sure you're buying the right system for your bathroom?

Here are 11 factors to help you 'sift through' the wide range of options and find what's best for you. Let's check out the key factors to compare shower kits!

1 What's your budget?

Comparing pricing amongst shower kits can be a slippery process at best. The first thing you must zero in on is what's included in the cost of the kit. (And if you're struggling with this question, skip ahead to *What's Included in an Alcove Shower Replacement Kit.*) You'll find all shower kits are NOT ONLY NOT (OK, sorry about the double negative) created equal, but they all don't even include the same elements.

For example, some shower kits only include the shower glass and shower pan. This is OK IF you're doing a custom tile job on the inside walls. Other shower kits only include shower wall panels and a shower pan. This works OK if you're planning to use shower curtains. However, most people want a 'complete shower kit' (which includes the shower pan, the shower walls and glass shower doors). And if you want to make an 'apples to apples' comparison, make sure you determine if the kits you're comparing include all 3 elements (base, wall panels and glass).

Assuming it does, you'll find a great deal of pricing difference if you're buying a low-cost shower kit (with thinner and shorter acrylic or fiberglass walls and glass doors, and bases which aren't as thick and durable) or a higher quality shower kit. For a low-priced kit they'll generally include 1/8" thick (or thin, depending on your perspective) acrylic or fiberglass wall panels, a 1/4" thick framed (or semi-frameless) shower door and an acrylic or fiberglass base for around \$1,800 to \$2,200.

If you want a higher quality shower kit with 3/8" thick laminate wall panels, a solid surface (or reinforced acrylic) shower pan and a 3/8" thick heavy glass shower doors expect to pay \$3,600 to \$4,400.



2 Will you DIY your shower project?

If you're a DIYer who HAS NOT done a complete shower kit installation before, a shower remodel can be an overwhelming project. And while it can be nice to (theoretically) 'save' money with a cheap shower kit, it can be frustrating if the online retailer or home center you bought your low-priced shower kit from doesn't have anyone to help you through the nitty-gritty of doing the job.



So, before you plunk money down on a shower replacement kit, ask if your supplier or manufacturer will give you the direct line number of a technical person to help you through the process. If not – you may want to go 'Gingerbread-man' on this supplier and 'run, run, as fast as you can and say, "You cannot sell me I'm the Smart-Shower-Kit-Buying-Man!"

3 How long will it take to get the kit?

I don't know about you, but supply chain problems have been a major challenge over the last year (ask anyone who's tried to buy an appliance lately). And as of this writing, supply issues don't appear to be completely in the rearview mirror either.

And while it may be nice to get a 'deal' on a shower system, it's not nice when you're down to one bathroom in the house and can barely get time to take a shower because your teenage daughter is hogging the space (and the shower kit you ordered is STILL on backlog).

Before buying a system, find out how long it'll take to get the product. And IF it does take a long time, ask if you're required to put all the money down RIGHT NOW for products which will take months to arrive.



4 Should you put your 'money where your feet are?'



You've heard the saying to put your money where your mouth is. However, I'll bet you haven't heard the saying you should put your money where your feet are (or at least when you're talking about your feet in a shower).

You see, a shower pan is the 'foundation' of your shower. If it cracks, you'll have an expensive repair on your hands and be forced to replace products (like your shower wall surrounds) above the pan as well.

And while it's not 'sexy' to spend a lot of money on a shower pan, if a thin flimsy fiberglass or acrylic pan cracks you'll be sorry you 'cheaped-out' on your base.

For this reason, give serious thought to sturdy solid surface shower pans. While your pan won't get as many oohs and aahs from your relatives and friends (unless you have one like this black marble low profile shower pan below), it'll be a smart 'insurance policy' to ensure against cracks.

5 Are you the one cleaning the shower door?

There are 3 problems many people are fighting with when cleaning their existing shower doors:

- **Problem #1** A U-shaped track at the bottom of the sliding tub or shower door gathers dirt, hair, and other disgusting things I won't mention.
- **Problem #2** Shiny chrome or bright brass doors (can you say 'out-of-date?') are spot magnets. If only you had a brushed finish which didn't show so many spots and aggravate your ADD when you have to look at the door every day.
- **Problem #3** Cheap existing glass doors are spotted and cloudy and can't be cleaned no matter what crazy cleaning concoctions you try.

And if you don't want to 'fight' these 3 problems you need a smarter shower door this time around. Look for these 3 features to lick (OK – not literally) the problems listed above.

- **Feature #1** Get a frameless sliding shower door which doesn't have a U track at the bottom.
- **Feature #2** Insist on a brushed finish vs. a shiny finish for shower door frames and hardware.
- **Feature #3** Make sure you get glass surface protection applied on the glass at the factory to protect against cloudy or spotted glass.



6 Will your shower kit add to – or take away- from your new bathroom décor?

You're so excited about your bathroom remodel. You're finally getting rid of the tired (and moldy) tile shower walls or stained fiberglass one-piece surround. You'll finally replace the rickety, behind-the-times vanity with the swirly cultured marble top the original home builder put in eons ago when mullets were in fashion. You've found the perfect Modern Farmhouse shaker cabinets. You've found fun sinks and faucets. You've even purchased the perfect bath towels and one of those cool, trendy ladders to set them on.

However, when you've researched shower replacement kits, you're seeing the same, boring white, plasticky shower stalls which look like they belong in a low-priced rental apartment. You're thinking, *isn't there something better than this?* And the good news is ... there is!

Don't settle for white, plasticky and boring in your shower alcove. Look at products like 3/8" thick laminate shower wall panels (which come in 28 patterns) or patterned solid surface shower pans (with 6 color/texture options) or shower glass with thick modern handles. Don't settle for a boring, white, low-budget shower! Stylish and shower kits should not be terms which are mutually exclusive.



7 Will the system live well as you age?

None of us likes to think about that evil dude—Father Time. However, no matter how hard we try (even with all the Botox, Pilates, hair replacement and hair coloring—and I resemble that remark—treatments in the world), that dude still catches up on us. The mobility you had when you were the star on your football or volleyball team ‘back in the day,’ isn’t quite the same today. OK, if you’re being honest, you’re not even in the same league!

Stepping over a shower curb – or getting into the tub – isn’t as simple as it used to be.

And given this challenge, you need to make your new shower simpler to use. And a smart way to do this is insist on a low-profile shower pan. Not only do these pans look modern and stylish, they also make your bathroom safer, whether you’re designing it for yourself, mom, dad or even mother-in-law.

Modern low-profile pans are only 1 1/6” high. They’re a cinch to enter AND look *en vogue* (if I were to go high-brow on you) as well.



8 Are you getting a ‘complete’ shower kit? Will you get ‘nickled, dimed and ‘dollared’ as you ‘attempt’ to install the shower?

As discussed in factor #1 a complete shower kit should include three major components. They are:

1. A shower pan
2. Shower wall panels
3. A glass shower door

However, a complete shower kit SHOULD NOT end there. You see many shower kits skimp (to make the price seem lower) on small elements you’ll still need AFTER you buy the kit. And this is how you get ‘nickled and dimed’ (and ‘dollared’ if there was such a word) along the way. To prevent against this, make sure these 3 small items are included in your kit.



- **Small item #1** A shower drain and strainer cover. Bottom line is I’ve never seen a shower pan installed WITHOUT a drain! Never!
- **Small item #2** Sealants, trims, and fasteners for your wall panels. Wall panels won’t get ‘magically’ applied to wall backer boards without sealants, trims and fasteners.
- **Small item #3** A ‘security glass’ shower door which won’t explode on you! While tempered glass is good (and required for shower doors), security glass (which won’t explode) WILL protect your ‘assets’ (hope I don’t offend anyone) while showering in your ‘birthday suit.’

9 How long are you planning to stay in this home? What’s the value of the neighborhood?

While we all want the best of everything, sometimes it’s smart to be frugal. For example, if you live in a modest neighborhood and are only planning to stay for a couple of years, a lower priced shower kit may be good enough. Or if you’re doing a ‘fix and flip’ on a home in a lower-rent neighborhood, cheaper shower kits can be a sound investment.

When determining if you want a cheaper or high-quality shower kit, consider the value of your home AND how long you’re planning to stay.

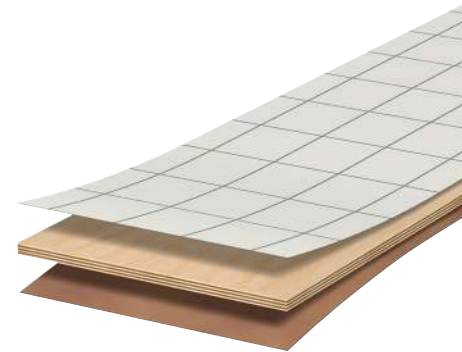
10 As Clara Peller might have asked, “Where’s the beef...in this shower kit?”

For many of you, I know this commercial may be before your time. However, an uber-popular commercial (before the word ‘uber’ even meant what it does today) in the mid-1980’s was Wendy’s “Where’s the Beef” ad campaign, starring American character actress Clara Peller. This old lady was a crackup (see below to see what I mean). After all, who likes a hamburger that is short on the burger, or a funny lady posing the question?

And just like you can’t get a quality hamburger if it’s thin on the beef, I’d contend you can’t get a quality shower if it’s ‘thin’ on its base, shower wall panels and glass shower doors.’

Better quality shower bases are thick, weighty, and durable. Better quality shower wall panels are 3/8” thick – not wafer thin and flapping all around when you install them. Better quality shower glass is heavy and 3/8” thick. When you operate these doors, it’s like being in a luxury hotel suite.

Before you plunk down your ‘dough’ (yes, that bad hamburger bun pun was intended ... sorry!), make sure you ‘get the beef’—a beefier shower system.



11 What's the quality of the customer service and warranties which come with this kit?

It's easy to remember times you've experienced customer service which made you want to scream. When you needed help NOW you were put on hold for 45 minutes. Then you had the 'privilege' (sarcasm intended) hearing 'how their menus had changed' and 'how important your phone call was to them!' What a bunch of crap!

You get mad at yourself because you didn't realize this service was going to be so bad UNTIL AFTER you became a customer!

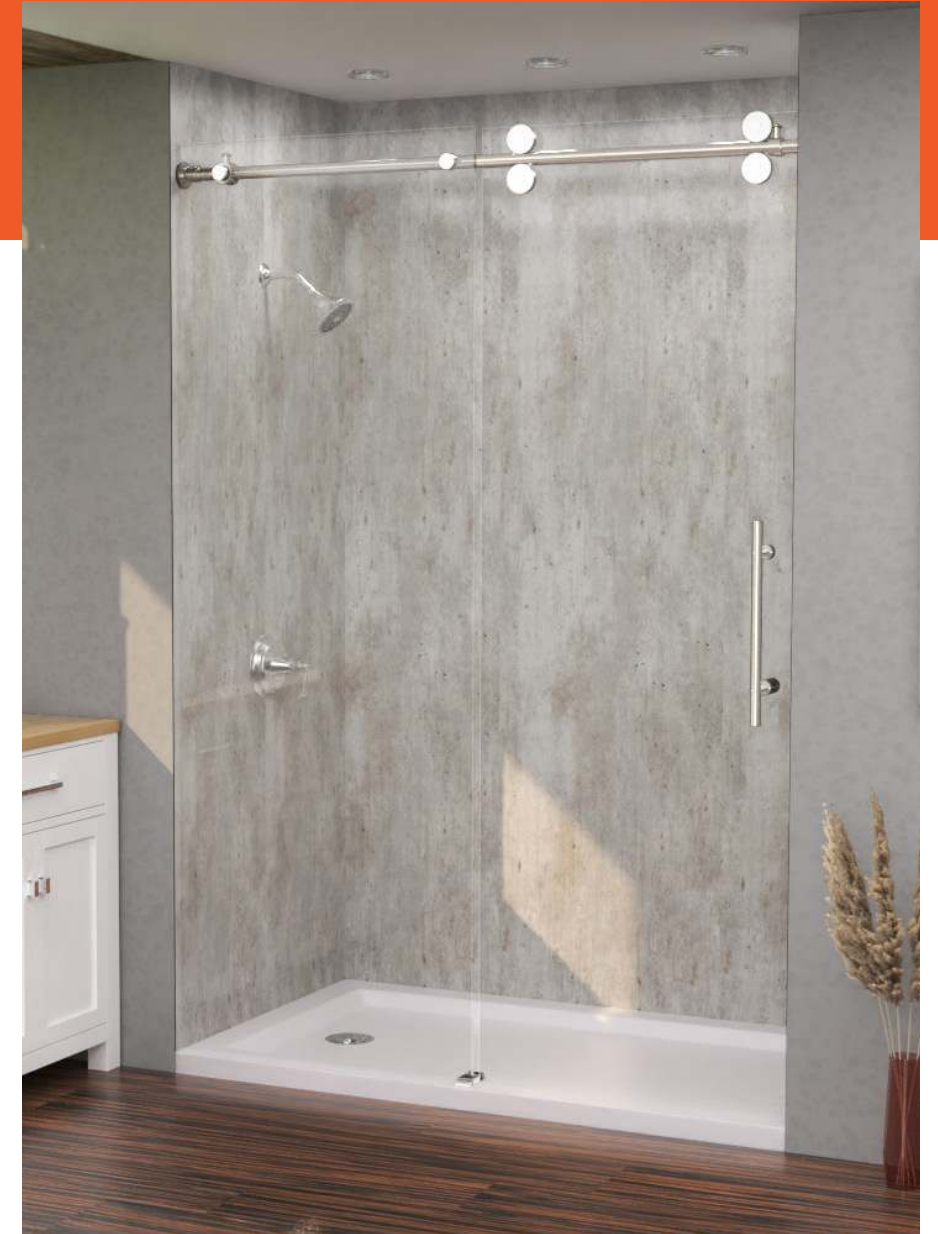
To make sure you don't get victimized with bad service after buying a shower replacement kit, read on-line reviews of the companies you're considering. No matter what company you'll buy from things can—and do—occasionally go wrong. The question becomes, how does your potential supplier handle challenges? How will they treat you when your phone call isn't a pleasant one and the crap is hitting the fan?

In addition to investigating the customer service experience (or lack thereof), dig into product warranties. How many 'loopholes' are built into the warranty which allow the supplier 'wiggle out' of helping you? As a matter of fact, some on-line retailers (who often to sell to DIY'ers) even void the warranty if the materials are installed by a DIY'er. Imagine that, you sell to DIY'ers and then tell them to 'hit the bricks' when the proverbial (you know what) hits the fan!



See All the Angles

What's Included in an Alcove Shower Replacement Kit?



If I was asked to answer the question of what's included in most alcove shower replacement kits in two words, I'd say....Not enough!

You see when you're online (or in a home center store) looking for the perfect alcove shower replacement kit to upgrade from the cheap builder's grade shower (or outdated and moldy tile shower), you're looking for 2 things:

- 1) A complete shower kit
- 2) An upgraded shower kit

First, you want a complete shower kit. You don't want to order your kit only to discover you're missing a door, or wall panels or a drain assembly. You don't want to be 'nickled and dimed' when you need to find (after you thought—incorrectly—you got a full kit) pieces-parts and adhesives for a quality installation which were not included in the shipment.

Second, you want a new shower which is way better than the old, dated, and hard to clean shower you own today. You don't want to replace your ugly old shower, with a new shower which will get ugly, old, and nasty faster than you can say, "Is my warranty over already?"

The question is how can you make sure you're getting a complete AND high-quality shower kit you'll be proud to own for years to come?

In this article, I'll lay out in Part 1 what's often NOT included in standard shower kits you'll find on the Internet or in Home Center stores. I don't want you to be surprised when essential parts 'come up missing.' Then you end up spending waaaaay more than anticipated because the kit price you thought was 'too good to be true,' was 'too good to be true.'

Second, I'll identify in Part 2 features you should insist on for an upgraded high quality shower kit. Assuming you're not looking to buy a 'bargain-basement' system for a 'fix and flip' property, you want to know you'll not only get good value for your money, but you'll actually enjoy walking into (and using) your shower for years to come. You deserve an upgraded shower. However, you'll need to be a thoughtful consumer to make sure you get one!

So, let's explore alcove shower replacement kits further.

What's often NOT included in a complete shower kit:

1 Shower wall panels

You may wonder why some kits don't include shower wall panels (besides the fact leaving them out makes the shower kit seem waaaay less expensive). The reason is the company's marketing these kits generally are shower glass door manufacturers who don't offer wall surround panels.

And while, in some cases, this can be OK (for example if you're building tile shower walls), in most instances this isn't good. Most people buying replacement alcove shower kits wants a project which is low maintenance AND simple to install (and tile shower walls with grout joints are NEITHER of these). So, make sure you're getting shower wall panels with your kit.



2 A glass shower door, or walk-in shower glass

If I'm being real with you, I'll let you know supplying glass shower doors can be a PAIN! There are multiple styles of doors (bypass, sliding, pivoting and a walk in to name a few). There are multiple hardware finishes (chrome, brushed nickel, oil rubbed bronze and matte are the most popular choices). And there's multiple heights and widths. The choices are endless.

However, the #1 reason many E-Commerce suppliers don't like to offer shower glass is they not only require a larger inventory investment, but they also require more technical skill from their C.S.R.'s (Customer Service Reps) to advise homeowners and contractors on what shower door or shower screen is best for their job.

So, once again to keep the 'advertised price' low, and the complexity down – the shower door is often omitted from the shower kit. The problem for you is, if you hate moldy shower curtains which need to be replaced all the time AND want a quality shower door WITHOUT a nasty track at bottom, you'll want a kit which includes a door which is specifically designed to work the shower pan you chose.

It's a pain when the glass shower doors aren't included. Make sure their part of the package.



3 A drain for your shower base (and especially one which doesn't look ugly)

Shower drains are like batteries for kid's toys you assemble before the holidays. It's unbelievably frustrating when you find out the batteries (or shower drain and strainer cover) aren't included. Sure, the shower kit supplier saves a few bucks (about \$30 to \$70) not including a drain kit. But for you it's a hassle to shop for the drain and then worry IF the drain you bought will work with the shower pan included in the kit.

Bottom line: make sure you get a shower drain. And for 'style points,' see if the drain cover is designed to blend into the shower pan. It's nice to know drains don't have to be the 'red-haired-stepchild' of your new shower.



4 Sealants and adhesives for the shower wall panels

I'll tell you one simple truth: shower wall panels don't go onto your wall backer board by 'magic.'

Some shower wall panels need adhesives to be glued up. Other wall panels require screws to be mechanically fastened to wall backer boards. In all cases, though, there's SOMETHING needed to install the shower wall panels.

Make sure you're getting the sealants, adhesives and screws you need. And if you're not, budget into your total cost money to go out and buy them so you can properly install your shower wall surround kit.



5 A direct line to a 'shower specialist' who can answer your questions

Whether you're a DIY'er (er weekend home improvement warrior) or a contractor, you'll likely have questions about the products and installation of your shower kit. And with many ecommerce companies (or big box stores) you're downright lucky if you can talk to the same person twice about your project (and you'll know you've really 'won the lottery' if they actually know what they're talking about).

Ask (before you buy the shower kit) for the cell phone (or direct line) of a shower specialist who can help with technical and installation questions.

6 A corner shower shelf or recessed caddy

OK, everyone needs to store soap, shampoos, loofas, and body lotions (and if you're living with my family this list is endless).

You need to make sure you have place for your shower and bath products so they're not sitting on the floor oozing slippery liquids which could cause a nasty fall.

Make sure you're getting a corner shower shelf or caddy. Know up front how much they'll cost, what types of accessories work with your shower wall panels and how they're installed into the wall panels.



What you should look for if you want an upgraded shower kit:

I'll be blunt. Many off the shelf budget shower kits are NO BETTER than the 'low-low-price' cheap builder's grade shower system you're desperately trying to get rid of!

Most people are looking to upgrade their shower or replace their tub with a shower. However, they aren't sure if they've actually realized their goal until they receive the shipment on their doorstep. And if you're let down when you ACTUALLY see your kit, it's too late. Because at that point, even IF you're able to return the shower kit, you're absorbing restock and shipment fees which effectively makes you STUCK with a substandard system.

So, the question is what should you look for to make sure you're getting an upgraded shower kit? Here are seven features to know so you're 'not fooled again' (as the legendary rock band The Who would say) and end up stuck with a shower you're not happy with ... again.

1 A 'solid' shower pan

It's not good when you walk into a cheap shower pan and it not only squeaks, but it also moves under your feet! You start thinking, "I hope this 'puppy' doesn't crack on me!" You need a shower pan which is sturdy. You need one which is built to outlive your time in this house. It's for this reason you should look for either a stone shower pan or a reinforced acrylic shower base.

Stone shower pans are durable and thick. For example, a 60" x 32" pan weighs 123 lbs. They don't flex because they're solid stone.

Or another option is an MDF (multi-density fiberboard) reinforced acrylic shower pan. These units are more cost-effective than stone pans while still being 'beefier' under the surface to withstand the 'big boys and girls' in your family with minimal flexing.



2 The shower pan is designed to work for the 'long-run'

Sometimes when the unexpected happens the beautiful shower you installed a few years ago becomes useless. Mom was doing fine, until that fateful day she fell. Now she can't step over the 4" high curb in the shower pan you paid your remodeling contractor big-bucks to install.

It's for this reason a high-quality shower kit should be designed to work for the long run. To ensure your shower will work as you, or a loved one ages insist on a low-profile shower curb. With shower pans with low thresholds, you'll know Mom will be able to get in no matter how good (or not so good) her mobility is.



3 You get thick—and stylish—shower wall panels

While you LOVED, LOVED, LOVED the looks of the tile shower when it was installed 20 years ago, today it's a disaster with brown, moldy grout joints. And while you considered cheaper shower wall panels alternatives, you couldn't bring yourself to buy a 1/8" 'wafer-thin' plastic surround to replace the tile. You want a stylish and grout free shower wall system which is built to last.

If this is your goal, check out laminate shower wall panels. This product is not only 3/8" thick (3x thicker than most shower surrounds), but you have 28 choices for your upgraded shower kit. And since the panels are so realistic with their indented tile and stone look joints, only you'll realize it's not the real thing!



4 Your wall panels reach the ceiling in a standard 8' high bathroom

One of the ways shower kit suppliers 'cheap out' on their systems (and keep the advertised price lower) is they make the panels 72" to 76" high. As a result, these panels don't reach the ceiling. This leaves you with exposed drywall above the shower walls you 'get' (sarcasm intended) to maintain. Quite frankly this is a...Pain in your rear!

Look for shower wall panels which reach the top of your 8' ceiling and also have trim pieces you can use above them to cover ceiling height variations or installation cuts which aren't as perfect as you would have liked.

5 Your shower doors are thick and tall

You swear (even though you try NOT to do this around the kids and grandkids), your original home builder chose the cheapest framed shower door on the market. It not only wobbles 'to and fro,' but your 6' 2" spouse has to 'duck' to get in! You DO NOT want to deal with another substandard shower door again.

High quality shower kits include heavy glass shower doors which are 3/8" thick and 79" high or taller. When you open them you'll know you own a luxury shower door (just like the ones you've experienced when staying in fancy hotels). And another big bonus is your spouse won't bang their head getting in either.

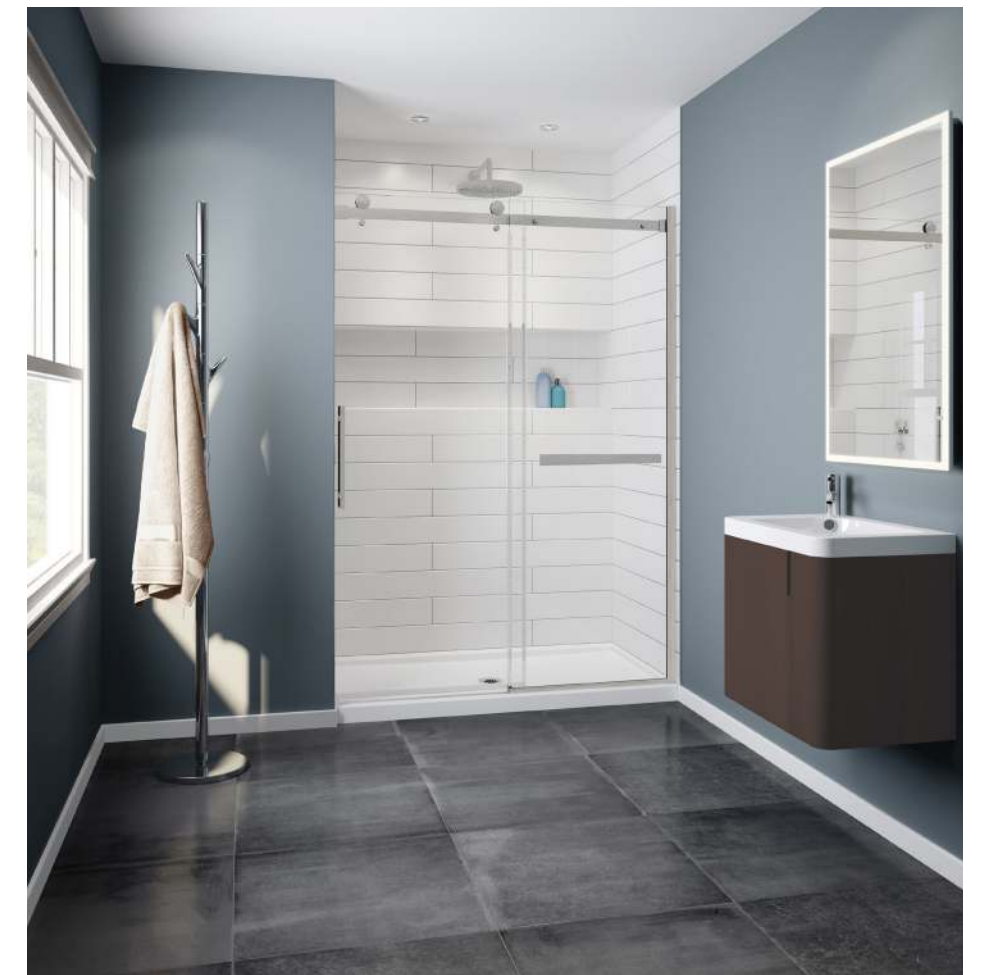
6 Your shower door and framing system is oh-so-simple to clean

If you're the one who 'get stuck' with the chore of cleaning your glass shower door and shower door frames you know what a chore it is.

First, you 'get to' clean out hair, dirt, and scum from the bottom 'U-track' of your wobbly bypass shower doors. Oh, the 'glory' of your life never ends! Then you 'get to' wipe off spots on your chrome (or worse yet, outdated bright brass) shower doors. Finally, you 'have the pleasure' of staring at water spots you can't get out of the glass which were caused by hard water. You've come to this conclusion...your cheap shower doors are IMPOSSIBLE to clean!

A low-maintenance (yet high style) shower door system is essential in a high-quality shower kit. And here's 3 features you want to zero-in on to make sure your door WILL NOT be a pain to maintain.

- ▶ Feature 1) Look for a sliding or bypass shower door which doesn't have nasty tracks at the bottom.
- ▶ Feature 2) Look for a shower kit which has a brushed nickel finish (vs. chrome) so spotting doesn't show like a sore thumb.
- ▶ Feature 3) Insist on a shower kit with glass surface protection. This process allows the water to bead off your glass shower door like RainX on a car windshield and keeps mineral deposits from being permanently embedded in your glass doors.



7 You'll get people (and a warranty) which 'have your back' during and after the installation

Initially you might feel like you got 'such a good deal' (as New Yorkers love to say) buying a low-priced shower kit on the Internet (or in a retail store). However, then you find out there's NO ONE to answer your (seemingly endless) installation questions. And then when you learn your warranty was voided because you were DIYing the job (OR didn't have a licensed plumber install the shower pan), you not only 'blew your cork,' but you also realized you blew your money!

Before putting cash down on what you (think) is a high-quality shower kit, make sure you have the name AND direct phone number of someone to call for technical advice. After all, you don't do this project every day. Also make sure your warranty won't be voided if you're DIYing the job. This is a game some Ecommerce retailers use to 'wiggle out' of warranty claims.

Feel like you understand what you need in your shower replacement kit?

I know there's a lot of factors to make sure you don't buy a new shower replacement kit which isn't any better than the old, moldy tile shower or flimsy, and dirty fiberglass insert you're looking to replace today. However, if I did my job right you should now have a clearer picture of what to avoid and what to look for in a 'complete' shower kit, one that will be an upgrade over what you're (reluctantly) living with today.

You may still be wondering about the cost of a high-quality shower kit, or how to choose the best shower pan, or what color or patterns of wall panels will work with your decor. If describes you, call me or my team at 877-668-5888 or click for a Free Design Consultation. Our company (Innovate Building Solutions) wholesales high quality shower kits nationwide and would be happy to answer any of your questions.

And if you're looking for a nicer shower kit installed in your Cleveland, Ohio home, call The Bath Doctor at 216-531-6085. If you're outside Cleveland Ohio (which is undoubtedly most of you) ask for a referral to one of our installing dealers.

We serve local and national clients. If you are outside of Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio we invite you to call 877-668-5888 or visit innovatebuildingsolutions.com/glass-shower-door

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