



How To Hire A Contractor

We have all heard the nightmare stories of a construction project going bad. So what can you do to ensure the best possible result with your home improvement project? The answer is – hire a reputable, experienced contractor.

Here are some tips for accomplishing this:

1. Get Recommendations

- Ask your friends and family for recommendations.
- Check the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (www.nari.org) or the National Association of Home Builders (www.nahb.org) for a list of member remodeling contractors in your area.

2. Contact the Contractors and Interview Them

- If they were not immediately available, did they return your call within 24 hours?
- Do they do projects similar to yours?
- How long have they been in business?
- How long have they worked with their subcontractors?
- Can they provide a list of client references?
- What trade organizations do they belong to?
- Do they have a current California Contractors License?
- Do they have liability and workers' compensation insurance?

A good contractor will also be asking you questions such as:

- What is the scope of your desired project?
- Do you have the plans already or do you also need design work performed?
- What is your desired time frame for doing the project?
- Do you have a budget?

After this interaction, you will have a feel for the company's reliability, experience and organization.

3. Set Up a Meeting

The goal of the meeting is for the contractor to better understand the scope of work of the project and for you to get a better idea of the reliability, experience and professionalism of the contractor.

- Did the contractor show up on time?
- Did he/she have a neat and professional appearance?
- Was the contractor able to clearly communicate with you?

- Did they listen to your needs and concerns?
- Did they talk knowledgeably about the technical aspects of the project?
- What are the next steps involved in moving forward with the project?
- When will the contractor be able to give you the estimate?

4. Check References

- Check the California Contractors License Board (www.cslb.ca.gov) to verify that the contractor's license is in good standing and that they carry workers compensation insurance for their employees
- Check your local Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org) to verify that the company does not have a history of disputes with clients or subcontractors
- Call former clients to find out how their project went:
 - Was there good communication between the client and the contractor?
 - Was the project completed on schedule?
 - If there were delays, were they clearly communicated?
 - Was the jobsite kept clean?
 - Was the clients' property respected?
 - Were change orders handled equitably?
 - What would they do differently if they had a future project?
- Visit a current jobsite to see how the contractor works
 - Are the workers courteous?
 - Is the jobsite neat and safe?

5. Review the Estimates

- Is the estimate professionally presented?
- Does the estimate clearly show what is and is not included?
- Don't let price be your guide. Often the lowball contractor is desperate for work or may not run his business professionally. Go with your instinct. Who do you feel most comfortable with? Who do you have the best communication with?

6. The Contract

Once you have ironed out the whole scope of the project and are satisfied with the final estimate, a formal contract should be drawn up by the contractor. Insist on a clear contract which should include the following:

- Scope of Work – if there are any plans, they should be referenced in the contract



- A start date and anticipated completion date
- Payment schedule
- Explanation how change orders will be handled
- Warranty period
- Contractors license number and address
- If desired, you can request proof of liability and workers compensation insurance be included in the contract documents.

If you follow the above recommendations you will be off to a good start on your construction project!