



“Top 10 Things You Should Know Before Hiring A Contractor”

1. Be Prepared

- Know exactly what you want to accomplish.
- Have sketches, photos, clippings, etc. on hand to illustrate what you want done. If your project is a larger one you may want to first consult a qualified architect.
- Set a budget. Let them know your limit, or your parameters. Research going rates so that you have a solid starting point that is reasonable.
- Be aware of your own local planning, zoning, and building department expectations and restrictions. Most projects will require some form of permitting.

2. Interview

Interview your potential contractor. Try to select a knowledgeable, organized, experienced, and established contractor who will take a personal interest in the outcome of your project.

3. References

Always ask for 3 or 4 references from your contractor; and be sure to contact all of them. Former customers will be happy to share details if you ask. If you can't reach them ask for more.

4. Buyer Beware

Never take the risk of hiring an unlicensed contractor. Know the tell-tell signs of a “fly-by-night” contractor.

5. Check License Status

Check License status of your contractor by calling the Contractors State License Board or with the Regional Building Department.

NOTE: Licensing for plumbers and electricians is done at the local level. No state license for general contracting, however, all businesses must register with the state.

6. Contracts

Never verbally agree to anything. Get even minor changes in writing. Be sure to receive a complete written contract from your Contractor, clearly spelling out what the responsibilities of both parties will be, as well as the entire scope of work with a breakdown of all associated costs. Make certain a time limit is indicated for completion of agreed work.

7. Layout & Plans

Make sure that plans are drawn up before actual construction begins and sign off on those plans. In most cases, especially a basement those plans should not only be on paper, but transferred onto your cement floor. Once they are on your foundation floor, there should be 2x4 studs shot into the concrete signifying exactly where walls will go. These studs become plates where the walls will be hung with a 5” float to code.

8. Pay Only a % Down

Pay in stages...never in full before anything is complete.

9. Advance Payment

Advance payment for uncompleted work should be strongly avoided. Exception: Some special order items may require a deposit up front.

10. Sub-Contractors

As mentioned above, sub-contractors are required to hold specialized licenses for the trades they perform. To protect their rights to be paid, (in the event that they are not receiving payment directly from the owner himself, but from the General Contractor) some sub-contractors will file what is known as "Preliminary Lien Notice". This is not a lien against your property, but merely a notice to you that he or she is indeed working on your property for the General Contractor. In the event that the sub-contractor does not receive payment for his work from the General Contractor, the sub-contractor then would have 60 days to file a "Mechanics Lien" against your property. To protect yourself from this unlikely event, you may want to request a "Lien Release" from each sub-contractor, prior to the release of the final payment.

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