

# How to Hire a Home Repair Contractor

Is the roof leaking? Are there boards that have rotted on your deck or around windows? Does a door or window need replacement? Leaky faucet? Cracked wall, ceiling or chimney? Does your shower need re-grouting? These are all common household repairs.

Many homeowners choose to do repairs themselves. Others may lack the skills, tools or just not have the time to make a needed repair. That's when you need to hire a home repair contractor.

How do you select a home repair contractor? To help you get started, here's a checklist of tips and questions you'll want to get answered.

## 1) Finding a Home Repair Contractor

- ✓ Talk to friends who have had similar work completed. They can tell you about their experience and provide names and contact information of contractors.
- ✓ Check Websites of local contractors. Look for customer testimonials, certifications, affiliations, insurance information, licensing and how long they've been in business.
- ✓ When you've narrowed your list, check customer reviews of those contractors through your local Better Business Bureau and Websites such as Angie's List.

## 2) Prepare Before Meeting with Contractors

Big or small you will want the job done right and do not want to pay twice for the work if the person you hire does not do the repair properly.

- ✓ Prepare a written description of what you want done. Be as specific as possible. Make a copy of your notes for the contractor.
- ✓ Review this checklist and be prepared to ask the questions listed below.

## 3) Your Meetings with Contractors

Select several contractors to discuss your repair project with. Get to know them and their work. Ask them the following questions:

- ✓ How long have you been in business? The National Association of Home Builders ([www.NAHB.org](http://www.NAHB.org)) advises consumers that it usually takes three to five years to establish a financially sound business. You want to be sure that the contractor will be around after the repair work is complete to service any warranties.
- ✓ Where is your business located? (Be cautious of home-based businesses).

- ✓ Do you have licensed plumbers and electricians?
- ✓ Do you do the work yourself, use a crew or will you use subcontractors?
- ✓ Do you carry worker's compensation and liability insurance?
- ✓ Do you provide a written contract?
- ✓ Will you apply for permits (building, electrical, plumbing)?
- ✓ What kind of warranty do you offer and what does it cover?
- ✓ How and when do you clean up, particularly dust?
- ✓ Do you have a list of references?

#### 4) Check References

Take the time to check references. A reputable contractor will be able to provide plenty of positive references and will have a high percentage of repeat clients. Call them and ask the following questions:

- ✓ What types of repair work has the contractor done for you?
- ✓ Why did you select the contractor?
- ✓ Did the contractor show up on time?
- ✓ Did he return your calls and answer your questions in a timely manner? Could you reach him quickly?
- ✓ On a scale for 1-10, 10 being the highest, how would you rate him?
- ✓ Would you hire him again?

#### 5) Getting Estimates or Proposals

When you request an estimate be as specific as you can. You may want to discuss your budget for the repair work.

- ✓ Ask the contractor to submit the bid in person so that you can discuss the estimate with him. Review the estimate carefully. Be sure that everything you ask for is included.
- ✓ Provide the contractor with a list of items and materials you want to use. For example: paint, doors, windows, flooring, fixtures, tiles, finishes, lighting, etc.
- ✓ Ask the contractor for a work schedule.

#### 6) Get It in Writing

For your protection and peace of mind, **ALWAYS GET IT IN WRITING!**

- ✓ The contractor should provide a clearly written contract. Review it carefully.

## 7) Choosing a Contractor

Before making your final decision, make sure you can get along with the contractor and can communicate well. The contractor should be knowledgeable and willing to offer ideas.

- ✓ Call the local Better Business Bureau to check for complaints that may have been filed against the contractor.
- ✓ Look for a fair price. Don't automatically accept the lowest estimate. It may be unrealistic or the contractor may be seeking an advantage over competitors that may later result in unexpected costs. NAHB advises consumers to be cautious of unusually low priced bids.

Finally, and most importantly, when you hire a contractor consider reputation, knowledge, reliability and willingness to stand behind the work. Choose the contractor you feel will give you the best overall service.



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