

How to select a Contractor



Remodeling your home, or even addressing recurring maintenance issues, can become more costly than needed if the job isn't done right the first time. Don't give in to temptation to hire someone just to get it over with. Here's how to do the homework.

Identifying Contractors:

- Ask friends, neighbors and relatives for recommendations.
- Check available lists – Angie's List, Better Business Bureau, Center for Energy and Environment.
- Obtain the names of contractors from articles written about their work or advertisements in local papers and remodeling or building industry publications.
- Ask contractors for names of references and call the references before requesting a bid (see comparing bids, third bullet).

Requesting Bids:

Select at least three contractors and request written bids from each of them. Arrange for the contractors to inspect the job site, and provide them with a written description and/or plans for the project. The bids should include the following information:

- Name, address and phone number of the contractor.
- The contractor's license number.
- A complete description of the work to be performed including the materials to be used and how the work will be done. The bid should state that the contractor is responsible for obtaining all required permits and permit fees.
- A total cost for the project and a breakdown of the cost by specific components of the project.
- A schedule of when payments will be due. If a down payment is required it should be a small percentage of the cost (no more than 10-20% of the cost).
- A starting date and completion date for the project.
- A list of references.
- The signature of an authorized representative of the company and expiration date for the bid.

Comparing Bids:

- After receiving the bids, check each of them to make sure the work to be performed is the same. If any of the bids are incomplete or unclear, call the contractor to obtain the additional information and attach it to the bid.

- If one contractor is proposing to do something different, ask the other contractors for the cost of doing the work the same way. If one contractor is trying to cut corners the others will let you know.
- Call the references for your first choice. Ask them about their experiences with the contractor: Were they happy with the workmanship? Was the work completed on time? Did the contractor clean up the job site? Would they hire them again?

Once you have decided on a contractor, you can call them. Be sure to get the answers to any remaining questions you have before offering them the job. Before signing any agreement, read the information sheet on "The Construction Contract," on page 15 of this directory

—Doug Wise, Housing Coordinator,
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south minneapolis
housing fair



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