

How To Choose A Contractor

As consumers we put a lot of time and research into buying TV's, cars, and appliances. Why don't we use those same principles to hire a contractor? A contractor will be spending time in your home, working around family/ pets, and with luck giving the results you are expecting. Putting a little thought into this process can save time and money later. We have compiled a list of situations to avoid and our suggestions for finding the right tradesman for your job.

AVOID

Contractors who ask for full payment before work begins. Never pay upfront. A deposit of up to 50% is reasonable with the balance owing paid upon completion if using a reputable setter. If the job is large, "draws" may be scheduled with a final draw due on completion. This should be spelled out in your contract.

Special offers for "today only". Remodeling decisions should be made with careful consideration. Any "deal" someone offers should be good at any point. Do not let a contractor pressure you into an immediate decision.

Contractors who do not have good contact information. A cell number without a permanent office location is asking for trouble. Also a reputable contractor will return your calls and will communicate with you before, during, and after your job.

A bid that is much lower than the price from a reputable tile contractor can be a huge signal. Sometimes a questionable contractor will underestimate in error OR in order to get the job, only to surprise the customer later with extra charges. We see non- licensed, non- insured, "handymen", with no office, flying under the radar charging less. Question the quality of materials to be used. That bargain price on tile may yet be another warning sign. Less isn't always better.

Contractors who cannot produce a current WA State Contractor's License or proof of insurance. This is a big red flag. Beware. You have no recourse for bad work or inferior materials and you could be held liable for any injuries, unpaid bills, or theft that may occur. These things may raise the cost of your job, but they are there for your protection. Remember, you get what you pay for.

A knock on the door, a flyer on a post and or a sign in a tree are not signs of a good contractor. Unless you have a referral from someone who has used this person, you should be wary. A reputable contractor will appear professional, have a business card and business location, and will be glad to show proof of insurance, license, and referrals.

No written proposal outlining all work to be completed. Get everything in writing. A verbal contract means nothing.

How To Begin Your project

A good way to start your planning is to have your ideas and materials in mind. Look for pictures in books or magazines, visit model homes, ask a decorator/ designer, and visit your local tile showroom to check out samples to view in your home. A licensed installer may have pictures and/or suggestions that would fit your project. The internet is another good place for ideas.

Get bids for the work. (See Above). Ask your contractor to go over the bid and spell out specifics- tile, sinks, borders, and trim. Make any changes before materials are ordered and work begins.

Buying materials from a reliable source will ensure quality and will be backed by a warranty or guarantee. Buying seconds or "low" cost materials may save in the beginning of your project but can be a nightmare down the road.

"Interview" your contractor. Determine that they are licensed and insured. Check with your local Better Business Bureau. Be sure that you are comfortable with the person you are working with. They will be in your home and part of your daily life for the length of the job.

Understand the payment schedule and adhere to it. Your contractor is working hard to insure your job is completed in a timely and satisfactory fashion. Paying them upon completion helps them be more efficient at their work.