

FINDING A RELIABLE CONTRACTOR

helpful tips

DO YOUR RESEARCH

People in your neighborhood who have done similar projects are great resources. If you know anyone in the building trades, ask them as well. Employees of local hardware stores may also be able to provide contractor referrals. Read reviews on sites like Angie's List, HomeAdvisor, Yelp and Google to make sure the contractor is the right person for your job and will work well with you.

INTERVIEW MULTIPLE OPTIONS

Ask a lot of questions and get a written proposal with an estimate from each. When you compare bids, make sure each one includes the same materials and the same tasks, so you're comparing apples and apples.

CHECK LICENSES, COMPLAINTS & LITIGATION HISTORY

General contractors and most subcontractors should be licensed, though the procedure varies by state and municipality. Check your state disciplinary boards, Better Business Bureau and local court records for problems. Ask the contractor for a copy of his or her license and copies of the licenses of the subcontractors who will be involved in the project.

SIGN A DETAILED CONTRACT

Make sure your contract spells out exactly what will be done, including deadlines, payment schedule, the exact materials that will be used down to the model number and who will provide which materials. If the builder's contract is not detailed enough, write up your own or provide addendums. Any change in the project, whether you change your mind about products or request additional features, should generate a written change order that includes the new work, materials and cost.



DON'T PAY IN FULL UP FRONT

You don't want a contractor to use your money to finish someone else's job. The contract should include a payment schedule and what triggers each installment to ensure you're not paying for work on schedule when the contractor is behind the projected timeline. Expensive materials needed early on may require more deposit upfront to cover the cost, but that should be laid out in your payment schedule.



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