

7 Tips

IN HIRING THE BEST CONTRACTOR



Homeowners do a lot to maintain and improve their properties. At a certain point, though, they need to bring in trained professionals.

Contractors can help with everything from a new build to major additions, renovations and a plethora of additional home improvement and repair projects. There are also plenty of construction contractors to work with, with IBISWorld reporting that there are 3,962,222 construction businesses in the U.S. alone.

For homeowners, this astronomical number is both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, it means there are plenty of companies to work with. On the other hand, finding a contractor that fits your needs and will work well with you can feel daunting.

Fortunately, there are ways you can sort through your options and find that needle-in-a-haystack contractor that best fits your needs.

1. Know What You Want

Before you make any calls for recommendations or send an email asking for a quote, start by considering what you're asking for. What exactly do you want your contractor to do?

Don't be vague, or you'll set yourself up for issues right from the beginning. Consider each thing that you need, even if you aren't sure about the details.

For instance, if you want a contractor to take down a wall in your living room, consider details like existing outlets, flooring, and other elements that might be disrupted by the project. That way, you can discuss everything thoroughly when you meet and ask for a quote.

2. Do Your Homework

It's also a good idea to do some homework beforehand. For instance, what does it normally cost to complete your current project in your hometown? It's OK to ask for multiple quotes to get the best rate.

It may be difficult to find comparable homes and projects if you live in a sparsely populated area, while at the same time, building codes, permits, or regulations in an urban center like Austin could add up.

Other questions to consider include:

- How long should the project you're requesting take on average to complete?
- What materials are needed?
- What alternatives are there?

The more informed you are going into the process, the easier it will be to gauge how honest and capable each contractor is.

3. Find a Reputable Source of Contractor Leads

Once you're prepped, it's time to find some contractors to interview. There are multiple ways to do this.

You could use a site like [Angi](#) or [HomeAdvisor](#) to pair with a contractor. You can also use Google, Yelp, or social media to locate reputable contractors near you. When using a third-party source, always read reviews and ratings.

Word-of-mouth is one of the best options. If you have a friend or family member who has a good reference, that can help. It also gives you a better position in the professional relationship since the contractor will know that their reputation with more than one customer is at stake.



4. Always Request Credentials

Once you start talking to contractors, don't be afraid to ask for proof that they're qualified to do the job you're asking them to do. Licenses and insurance are important elements in the home improvement process.

Next Insurance points out that [contractors in Texas](#) don't operate under a statewide requirement. Instead, licenses are issued locally and may not even be required in some cases.

Figure out what licenses and insurance are required in your area. Then make sure each contractor is licensed, up to date and also has appropriate insurance (depending on the work they're doing).

5. Look for the Little Signs

As you interview contractors, there are many small signs to look for that can also help you gauge if they're a good fit. For instance, are they responsive and on time? Are they

receptive to comments and interested in incorporating your feedback?

Formality is also important.

- Do they use contracts?
- Do they write down their estimates?
- Do they have a clear understanding of the codes and permits required?
- Do they have a clean legal record?

Small signs like these can help you decipher if a contractor is a good fit.

6. Don't Stop With One Quote

You don't need to hire the first contractor you meet. Most people recommend getting at least three bids. This can be a lot of work, but [Angie's List](#) points out the [benefits of considering multiple contractors](#).

This extra step helps you find the best price and offers you more options. You can get a better sense of each contractor's personality and how they all compare to one another, too.

7. Set Expectations and Stay Flexible

Finally, remember that no contractor is perfect. Even the most capable and honest professionals will do their best to deliver an accurate quote and deliver on that estimate.

It's wise to stay flexible and avoid setting unrealistic expectations, even when you think you've found the ideal contractor. Remember that you'll need to make adjustments as you go along. However, if you can make those pivots with a contractor that you trust, it makes the entire home improvement process easier on your mind, your emotions, and even your bank account.



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