

How to Find a Contractor Right for You

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Substantial improvements to your home can increase the value of your property and improve your comfort level at home. Once you've decided on a home renovation project, the first step to Remodel Right is to hire a qualified contractor. Research and preparation are key to finding the best contractor to get the job done. To help find a contractor who is right for you and steer clear of illegitimate partnerships, consider the following tips:

Recommendations and Research

- Ask friends or family for referrals of professionals who have successfully completed home improvement projects. Secure at least three names to give yourself options.
- Online reviews can be helpful in determining the quality of work completed by contractors. Google, Yelp and Angie's List aggregate anonymous reviews of contractors. The Better Business Bureau will have information on business complaints and licensing.
- Thoroughly interview each contractor. Have they completed a project similar in size and scope? Are they insured? Will they secure the necessary permits to complete the job? Do not end the interview without asking for several references you can contact.

Communication and Contracts

- Only contracts need to be signed not estimates. Do not sign an estimate, it may be a binding contract.

- You must have a contract. A professional will provide a contract that clearly outlines the type of job, process and costs. Do not work with a contractor that accepts only verbal agreements about the job you need completed.
- Communication with a qualified professional once the contract is signed should not end there. Connect with your contractor regularly, especially if it is a big project. It's easier to troubleshoot issues with your project if you identify and discuss them immediately.

Pricing and Payments

- If you receive a "special pricing" offer or a significantly lower price than other contractors, it is a red flag. Also, if your contractor can start right away – in other words, not that busy – that's another telling sign to hire someone else.
- Many professional contractors will ask for a deposit towards materials. This type of deposit should be paid once a contract is signed by both you and the contractor. Illegitimate contractors will ask for cash or full payment before starting the job. Don't do it.
- Know exactly what you are paying for. Ask contractors you are interviewing to provide a complete breakdown of costs. Look for materials, labor, profit margins and other expenses.
- Only make the final payment once you are satisfied with the work and have copies of the material receipts and lien releases from the contractor and subcontractor.

Completing a home project can be rewarding with the right contractor. To learn more about finding a qualified contractor for your home, contact the Springfield Area Home Builders Association at www.SpringfieldAreaHBA.com or 217.698.4941.