

EIGHT TIPS FOR HIRING A CONTRACTOR



Most homeowners, at some time, will experience the need to hire a contractor. This could be an unplanned event, such as needing to hire a contractor quickly to make repairs after damage is done by a broken pipe or fallen tree. Or, this could be the culmination of a years' long dream to transform your dated kitchen into a gourmet cook's dream, or to enlarge your cramped bedroom into a luxurious master suite.

Whatever the situation may be, hiring a contractor to make repairs or improvements to your home is not a decision to take lightly. Below are some tips and suggestions to help you make good decisions when hiring a contractor.

1. Is the contractor licensed, bonded and insured?

You can verify this by calling the State of Washington's Department of Labor and Industries at 1-800-647-0982 or visit the L&I website at www.lni.wa.gov. Ask if there have been any complaints about the contractor, and if any, the status.

2. Is the contractor a member of Olympia Master Builders?

The Olympia Master Builders (OMB) is a professional trade association representing member companies. OMB helps educate members on new products, construction techniques, business practices and industry issues.

3. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Good communications with your contractor is vital to a successful project, as it helps clarify exactly what you want done. Get the answers that satisfy your needs; after all it is your home!

- Are they a local company?
- How long have they been in business?
- What types of work are they licensed to do?
- To what local trade associations do they belong?
- How many jobs have they done similar to yours?
- Have they done work before that requires a permit?
- Who are their materials supplier references?

4. Does the contractor possess a good reputation among customers, and industry peers?

Ask the contractor to share names and numbers of customers. Check references thoroughly. Visit past work done by your contractor, and ask the homeowners for their opinions on the work done.

**5.
Examine your bids carefully.**

Bids that are noticeably lower than all others should be questioned. The difference may be in the quality of the materials used, experience of the crew doing the actual work, something is missing on the bid requirements, or it can be an indication that the contractor is not covering all the legitimate business costs. Don't automatically disregard a high or low bid, ask questions!

**6.
Obtain a written contract.**

Be sure that it includes price, payment terms, sales tax, permit fees (if applicable), the specific work to be performed, materials to be used, warranties and payment schedules. It is also a good idea to include change-order processes, final review and sign-off procedures and cleanup. Put all change-orders in writing and ask questions as work progresses. Avoid verbal contracts, and be very cautious about paying for incomplete work.

**7.
Permits are for your protection!**

Make sure permits are in place and inspections are made as the work progresses. Make sure the name of your contractor appears on the permit.

**8.
Does the contractor offer a warranty?**

If so, what kind, and for how long? Be sure you understand what is covered under the warranty and what isn't.



Professional Certifications:

OMB members have the opportunity to earn advanced certifications from the National Association of Home Builders' University of Housing. The University of Housing offers comprehensive training programs to builders, remodelers and other industry specialists that lead to professional credentials. These credentials mean that rigorous coursework and a commitment to be the best.

Visit omb.org for more information.



If you need assistance with getting a referral for a contractor, remember that Olympia Master Builders has a free online, searchable Member Directory. Simply visit www.omb.org to find OMB members that can help you to get the job done.

Olympia Master Builders is a professional trade association representing more than 500 member companies in Thurston, Lewis, Grays Harbor, Pacific and Mason Counties. The primary goal of OMB is to provide affordable housing for all segments of society. This is achieved by improving the construction industry and the business climate in which it operates. OMB members are committed to building strong communities, one home at a time."