

What To Look For In A Contractor

TIP#1

The Contract Itself

A contract protects the parties involved. Just because you had a great conversation during the first meeting at the house, you'll regret not having a contract when one of you forgets half of that great conversation and the work isn't completed on time.

TIP#2

Experience

Don't be intimidated to ask for previous experience and references. Does the contractor have additional education outside of field experience that would add value to your project?

TIP#3

License

Check to see that your contractor lists a license required for the work being done. A license means that your contractor passed the required exams and keeps active Insurance Coverage. But it also means your contractor has done the paperwork and is playing by the rules.

TIP#4

Insurance

Injuries can occur on a construction site. If the location is your home and your contractor does not have the proper insurance, you may be held liable. Check with your locality for the proper amount of liability insurance, and if the contractor has employees, check to see whether he carries worker's compensation insurance.

TIP#5

Scope of Work

There are many details to get right in a renovation, so write everything down before work begins. This can be the best way to get everyone on the same page. If your designer has drawn up detailed plans, make sure the contract references the designer and the date on the plans so you have something to point to should the finish on your woodwork be different from what you requested.

TIP#6

Duration of Work

Though projects often take longer than predicted for many legitimate reasons – some caused by the client and some outside the contractor's control – put the expected project duration in writing. The important thing is not that your contractor shows up every day, but that he finishes the project on time. Having a timeline will help calm your nerves if progress hits a slow spot.

TIP#7

Exclusions

A good contract should include a list of exclusions. These might be related to areas that will not be visible until the walls are opened up after demolition, or the level of cleaning you should expect after the work is complete. Also, talk to your contractor about the likelihood of finding asbestos behind the walls. He won't be able to say for sure, but he can speak from experience and help you plan your contingency budget.

TIP#8

Communication

Although we are well into the 21st century many in the Construction field still lack the essential tools for effective communication. Check the Contractors Website and social media sites to get a feel for the contractor's depth and ask for weekly written reports of progress to keep all vested parties on the same page.

TIP#9

Payment Schedule

While payment schedules can vary by the job, they should always be agreeable to both parties involved. In my opinion, payments tied to milestones in the project are better than those tied to percentages of completion. As long as you are confident that you're not paying for significantly more than what's been completed, you should be OK.

TIP#10

Warranty

The standard warranty for work is one year from substantial completion. If you've gotten recommendations from people you trust, you'll know where to find him later if needed.