

How to Talk With Your Contractor

By Jon Sader

Hiring, managing, and communicating with a contractor may seem like a daunting task, but only if you allow it to be. Unfortunately, there are many contractors out there that tend to be unscrupulous and will often suggest expensive projects that are not necessary for your home. You may be able to thwart this and other common contractor issues by finding the right contractor for you. Also, having a general understanding of certain home construction projects will pay off dividends and may prevent issues for you in the future.

Finding an honest, hardworking, and quality oriented contractor can be a difficult undertaking. However, there are many ways to find them. They are:

- Only use contractors that come highly recommended
- Ask your friends and neighbors who they have had positive experiences with in the past
- If all else fails, you can use trusted online ratings and reviews such as
 - *Angie's List*
 - *Better Business Bureau*
 - *Service Magic*
- And as always, make sure that these contractors are state licensed, insured, and bonded (if necessary)

When you do find a group of highly recommended contractors, you are going to want to ask for estimates from at least three different contractors. After you have your three estimates, do not just focus on the bottom line price of all 3 estimates and hire the contractor with the lowest bid. Instead, pay attention to the "Scope of Work" on the estimates and learn what kind of work it entails. The common saying "*You get what you pay for*" still applies for hiring a contractor and therefore the least expensive job may not always lead to the highest quality work.

Ask your contractor questions and make sure not to let them use words or industry phrases that you do not understand. There are many online references or books that will help you navigate through many home projects. These are great resources that will help you understand the intricacies as well as the lingo for the specific project you are looking to undertake. Also, do not assume that the old way is the best way. If a contractor is promoting a new technology make sure you research the pros and cons of the product before making a decision. There are many new technologies on the market that outperform the old and may even be less expensive.

By following these guidelines, the better your chances of having a positive contractor experience as well as a high quality finished project.