



## How To Choose A Contractor For Your Home Remodel Or Custom Build

**Everyone should carefully screen their potential contractors  
Use this guide to help you through the selection process**

### Ask for Referrals

Word of mouth-hands down, is the best way to find a qualified professional to tackle the job. Ask relatives, friends and neighbors whom they've had good experiences with. And ask what made it a positive experience, how the contractor handled problems and whether he or she would use the same contractor again.

### Look at Credentials

With recommendations in hand, do some preliminary research, whether it's with a phone call or a visit to the contractor's website. Find out whether he or she holds all the required licenses from state and local municipalities, along with designations from any professional associations such as the National Kitchen & Bath Association, the National Association of the Remodeling Industry and the National Association of Homebuilders. Look for contractors who have invested in course work and passed rigorous tests to earn particular certifications. Be aware, however, that not all certifications are created equal. Do some homework and find out the requirements.

### Interview Candidates

Narrow down the list of contenders and set up meetings. Try to keep it to three contractors, because things can get confusing beyond that. How a contractor answers questions is extremely important, but communication goes both ways. Candidates should ask plenty of questions, too.

### Check References

Ask to see some of the contractors' projects. If you approve of them, request references and call contractors' former customers to check up on them. Ask how the contractors did at executing the projects. Were they on time and on budget? Were the customers pleased with the outcome? Was there anything that could have been done differently?

Remember that when you're hiring a remodeler, you are buying a service and not a product. Quality of service will determine the quality of the finished project. Here are some things you'll want to explore and questions you'll want to ask when interviewing a remodeler.

### Business Experience and Management



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Does the remodeler:

Maintain a permanent mailing address, e-mail address, personal phone number, fax number, cell phone and voicemail?

Carry insurance that protects you from liability? Ask for a copy of the remodeler's insurance certificates to be sure. Also, ask the remodeler how much the project will add to the home's value and attain additional insurance from your provider.

Have an established presence in the community? How long has the company been in business under this name? Does the remodeler maintain solid relationships with contractors such as plumbers and electricians and work with them as a team?

Possess a trustworthy reputation among customers and peers? Is there a track record of success?

Has the remodeler earned any professional designations, such as Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR), Certified Bath Designer (CBD), etc.? How long has the remodeler been a member of any trade organizations?

Get It in Writing

After selecting a contractor, take a look at the documents he or she has prepared. Do they look professional? Scrutinize the contract. Does it seem fair and balanced? And make sure the legal agreement includes the following:

- a bid price and payment schedule

- specifics about the scope of work

- the site plan

- a sequential schedule of primary construction tasks

- a change-order clause

- a written procedural list for close-out

- an express limited warranty

- a clause about dispute resolution

- a waiver of lien, which would prevent subcontractors and suppliers from putting a lien on a house should their invoices go unpaid by the contractor

If everything checks out, you can sign on the dotted line with confidence.