

Things to Know Before Hiring Your Next Contractor

1. The contractor should have a good reputation.
 - How long has the contractor been in business?
 - Check the contractor's references, both clients and colleagues, to determine if work was completed satisfactorily and if the contractor has the technical knowledge to complete the job.
 - Does the contractor belong to any professional organizations?
 - Call the Better Business Bureau to find out if there have been any un-resolved complaints filed against this contractor.
2. The contractor should have the proper license for the job.
 - Ask to see a copy of the contractor's state license.
 - For commercial projects the license must be a Class B builder at a minimum.
 - For projects that are four stories or more, the license must be a Class A General Contractor.
 - Log on to the Construction Industry License Board website at www.state.fl.us/dbpr/ to look up the license number and view a list of complaints or actions against the contractor.
3. The contractor should have proper insurance.
 - Ask the contractor to provide you with copies of their certificates of insurance for General Liability, Property Damage, Worker's Compensation, Builder's All Risk Insurance, and Auto Coverage.
 - The minimum General Liability should be at least \$2,000,000.
 - Request to see a copy of the contractor's safety program as well as their most current OSHA form 300 and 300A to show a log of work related injuries for the previous year.
4. The contractor should provide you with a written estimate for all costs.
 - Estimate should clearly and accurately describe the scope of work.
 - Ask for explanations of anything you don't understand and details regarding lump-sum estimates.
 - Be reasonably certain that all costs are reflected in the written estimate.
 - The contractor should, in plain language, explain exactly what you should expect.
 - Ask if clean up is included at the project's end.
5. The contractor should provide you with a progress schedule including an approximate finish date.
 - The schedule should be detailed and understandable and include any details for which you will be responsible- i.e. selection of materials, colors, fixtures, etc.
 - Will the contractor provide periodic updates to the progress schedule with a reasonable, approximate finish date in writing?
6. The contractor should obtain the permits and know the inspection procedure of the local jurisdiction.
 - The contractor should be familiar with the requirements of the local jurisdiction regarding permitting and be willing to explain them to you.
 - Inspections should be requested at the appropriate times and all the details of the inspections should be explained to you by the contractor.

7. The contractor should explain the payment schedule and the process for protecting you from liens.
 - The Construction Contract should provide for a specified means of payment.
 - Payments should be completed as work is finished.
 - The contract should have in place a mechanism to insure that all subcontractors and vendors are paid and that they provide proof of payment in the form of signed lien releases.
 - Obtain all final lien releases from vendors prior to making your final payment to the contractor.

8. The contractor should have a written quality control program in place.
 - Don't rely on municipal inspectors to ensure quality.
 - The contractor should explain how his organization handles quality control on your project.

9. The contractor should provide you with a written warranty.
 - A warranty document should clearly illustrate what is covered and what is expected of both parties.
 - Start and end dates of the warranty should be clearly documented.
 - The contractor should be willing to perform a pre-expiration inspection of your project to correct any deficiencies before the expiration of the warranty period.

10. The contractor should be accessible.
 - You should be provided with the names of people within the contractor's firm that are responsible for the success of your project.
 - Ask for the contractor's direct contact information in case you need to speak with them directly regarding your project, payments, etc.