



## Strategies for Selecting a Contractor

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Selecting a contractor to perform home-improvement projects can be one of the most intimidating decisions a homeowner is likely to perform. How does one ensure hiring a competent and honest tradesperson? While there are no guarantees in life, some simple steps performed prior to and during the selection process will greatly increase the chances for a satisfactory relationship with your contractor.

**Step One** Be sure to have a good idea of what you want done prior to interviewing contractors. If possible, have your designs recorded on paper so that bidding contractors know exactly what you desire. Frequently, job bids vary in cost because the bidding contractors have interpreted the homeowner's desires differently. It is best to compare apples to apples.

**Step Two** Advertise your need for a contractor among friends and coworkers. The use of personal referrals is an excellent method to obtain honest opinions of crafting ability. As people are more apt to criticize rather than praise, this could be a very effective tool to sort out the disreputable contractors.

**Step Three** Ask for recommendations from building supply and hardware stores, lending organizations, and the local newspaper real estate editors for reputable and skillful contractors. Local and state builder associations will gladly provide lists of member remodelors and contractors as a starting point. Several of these organizations are listed at the end of this fact sheet.

**Step Four** Now that a list of prospective contractors is compiled, select several to submit bids on the job you propose. During the interview process, be sure to ask each contractor to bid on an identical task. The description from *step one* is what you need. Be sure to ask the contractor for local references and be sure to check them. Ideally, you want references from recent and not-so-recent jobs. This will give you some clue as to the longevity of the craftsmanship as well as the current state of operations. When checking references, be sure to inquire about quality of work, responsiveness to client concerns, reliability, and accessibility. Finally, ask if the customer would hire the contractor again.

A second item the contractor should provide upon asking is a listing of the building material suppliers used by the firm. Reluctance to provide this list may signal a problem between the contractor and the supplier that would be wise to avoid.

When talking to the contractor, ensure that s/he is insured for workers' compensation, property damage, and personal liability claims. Some areas may require special licensing and bonding. Check with your local authorities to determine the contractors' requirements and make sure these requirements are met.

When interviewing the prospective contractors, evaluate how they listen to your ideas and concerns. Query the contractors about problem-solving abilities and ask for examples. Ultimately, you are trying to determine whether you will feel comfortable dealing with the contractor for the length of the project. If the answer is no, then keep looking.

***Step Five*** After the interview with the contractor, contact the Better Business Bureau and your local consumer affairs office about any information they might provide on the firms you are considering. Reported unresolved conflicts with clients should be seriously considered before hiring that contractor. Secondly, using the list of building suppliers provided by the contractor, contact them to find out if there has been a problem with the relationship. Payment problems or litigation should signal a red flag to seek another contractor.

***Step Six*** Once a contractor is selected, be sure they provide a detailed list of the work to be performed and a cost breakdown for each step. Leave nothing to chance - be sure everything you want is in writing before signing a contract. It is wise to perform payments in increments as the job is completed. The cost breakdown should serve as a guideline as to how payments are to be made. Try to reserve 10% of the cost as the final payment to ensure a satisfactory job. If a building permit is required for your job, use passing this inspection as the final hurdle to complete payment.

***Step Seven*** Remember, you are just one party in the relationship. The contractor is entitled to a fair relationship as well. If you decide to change your plans or impede the progress of the contractor during the job, the contractor is entitled to compensation in either increased pay or compassion when the schedule is not met. A fair and just relationship on both sides of the home improvement fence will result in a happy homeowner and a prosperous contractor.

## State and Local Builder Associations

<p>Home Builders Ass. of KY 1040 Burlington Lane Frankfort, KY 40601 502-875-5478</p>	<p>Kentucky River Home Builders Chapter PO Box 1596 Hazard, KY 41702 606-439-2225</p>	<p>Lincoln Trail Home Builders Ass. 3434 Bardstown Rd. Elizabethtown, KY 42701 502-769-1055</p>
<p>Home Builders Ass. of Ashland PO Box 669 Ashland, KY 41105 606-836-6866</p>	<p>Home Builders Ass. of Central KY 200 Reardon Blvd. Bardstown, KY 40004 502-348-5768</p>	<p>Home Builders Ass. of Louisville 1000 N. Hurstbourne Pkwy. Louisville, KY 41223 502-429-6000</p>
<p>Audubon Area Home Builders Ass. 1100 Landing Meadow Dr. Henderson, KY 42420 505-827-2879</p>	<p>Northeastern KY Home Builders Ass. PO Box 875 Flatwoods, KY 41139 606-836-6866</p>	<p>Home Builders Ass. of Owensboro 3425 New Hartford Rd. Owensboro, KY 42303 502-688-0353</p>
<p>Home Builders Ass. of Bowling Green 859 Lovers Lane Bowling Green, KY 42103 502-781-3375</p>	<p>Home Builders Ass. of Hopkinsville 3000 Canton St. Hopkinsville, KY 42240 502-885-8319</p>	<p>Southeastern KY Home Builders Ass. 1177 American Greeting Card Corbin, KY 40701 606-526-1031</p>
<p>Home Builders Ass. of The Bluegrass PO Box 1444 Danville, KY 40423-1444 606-236-5371</p>	<p>Hopkins County Home Builders Ass. PO Box 1092 Madisonville, KY 42431 502-824-2108</p>	<p>Home Builders Ass. of Western KY PO Box 9567 Paducah, KY 42002 502-442-9572</p>
<p>Home Builders Ass. of Eastern KY PO Box 353 Harold, KY 41635 606-478-2654</p>	<p>Home Builders Ass. of Lexington 3146 Custer Dr. Lexington, KY 40517 606-273-5117</p>	<p>Scott County Home Builders Ass. PO Box 810 Georgetown, KY 40324 502-863-7500</p>
<p>Home Builders Ass. of Northern KY 209 Grandview Dr. Ft. Mitchell, KY 41017 606-3311-9500</p>	<p>Logan County Chapter PO Box 115 Russellville, KY 42276 502-726-3638</p>	<p>Madison County Home Builders Ass. 520 Old US 25 North Berea, KY 40403 606-986-2741</p>

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