

5 Things to Consider When Choosing a Contractor

- **Get several bids from different contractors.** The general consensus is that you should get 3 estimates at minimum. You will probably get different prices from all of them. Don't always disregard the highest or lowest bids, but confirm that they are all bidding on the same thing. Compare the materials and scope of work to be completed and ensure that they are comparable to the other contractors they are bidding against. A low bid may be due to desperation for work and bad craftsmanship, or it could be because the contractor missed something or misunderstood what you were asking for. Likewise, a high bid could be the result of the contractor bidding on higher end materials or extra work that wasn't clarified. The key is making sure that all contractors fully understand what you want and are bidding on the same thing.
- **Make sure they are licensed and insured.** All contractors should carry a \$1,000,000.00 liability policy or more. Ask for their contractor's license number and check to make sure they don't have any negative actions against them.
- **Get references.** Have the contractors provide references and if possible try to go and see some of their projects that might be similar to yours.
- **Pay attention to how they communicate with you.** Are they easy to get in touch with? Do they respond in a timely manner? Are they pleasant to deal with? Being able to communicate with your contractor is vital to the success of your project. Their promptness in responding to you now could be a great indicator of how they will be once the project gets going. Also make sure that they are willing to answer any questions or concerns that you have. Don't choose a contractor that you don't think you can get along with. You will have to spend a lot of time with them making decisions and handling any issues that arise.
- **Don't sign a contract that you don't understand.** The contract is there to protect both you and the contractor and should be fully understood by

both parties before signing. It should be simple and straightforward. The cost of the project, the materials and or allowances, the pay schedule and the estimated timeline for completion are the minimum things that should be included. Certain items will vary depending on the size and complexity of the project, but both parties should go over it together and make sure that they understand what the expectations for each are before signing. How changes to the contract will be handled should also be part of the contract.