

Tips for Hiring a Contractor for your Home Improvement Project

Looking to complete a home improvement project and you need to hire a contractor?
Here are some helpful tips for finding a reputable contractor:

Tip #1 - CALL AROUND

You should contact multiple contractors to talk about your home improvement project. When you first contact them, do they speak professionally and respectfully to you? Do they listen to what you want with your home improvement project or do they tell you what they think you should do? When answering questions do they give you a direct answer or do they give you the runaround?

Tip #2 - QUESTIONS THAT SHOULD BE ASKED

If the contractor is one of the following: plumbing, mechanical or electrical, are they licensed by the State of Ohio? ([Here is a link](#) for the contractor license lookup) Do they have insurance? Do they have a list of references you can contact? Will they provide you a detailed contract?

Tip #3 - MEET WITH CONTRACTORS

After contacting contractors narrow your list down to a minimum of 4 and meet with them. When you meet with the contractor, do not feel pressured to sign anything. The contractor should be prepared to tell you if your project requires a permit. If it does and the contractor wants you to pull the permits this is a red flag. You can always contact Building Standards and we can let you know if you need a permit depending on the scope of your project. The contractor should provide you a detailed quote that you can compare with all the contractors you are interviewing. If one contractor is substantially less than the others, this can be a red flag. What is their payment schedule and how do they accept payment? If they are cash only, you will not have any protections from your bank or credit card company if something goes wrong. Payment via credit card generally gives you the most consumer protection. Additionally, larger projects can be financed with a schedule of draws designated by the lender. Have they completed similar projects and are they willing to show you any projects that they are currently working on?

Tip #4 - SIGN A CONTRACT

Be sure to have a detailed contract for your project. If the contractor cannot provide one this is a red flag. Typically, contracts should have contact information, project start and end date, payment plan, a schedule of construction stages depending on the scope of the project, a detailed list of deliverables, change order provisions, information about warranties and a termination clause. This is not a comprehensive list and other details may be added to the contract, leave no detail out.

Tip #5 - RESOLVING ISSUES

The goal of tips 1 to 4 is to prevent any issues on your project. Unfortunately, if you do have any issues with your contractor, you should communicate directly with them to try to resolve the issue. If after communication, the issue cannot be resolved, you can request assistance from the following:

- YOUR ATTORNEY
- PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS THAT THE CONTRACTOR BELONGS TO
- THE BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU
- OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL, CONSUMER PROTECTION
- LOCAL MUNICIPAL COURTS (AKRON, BARBERTON, STOW, SUMMIT COUNTY COMMON PLEAS)

Please be aware that the role of the Building Department is to ensure that any construction meets the minimum standards of the Building Code. If a dispute arises about the project, the Building Department cannot help you resolve the conflict, only ensure that the minimum code standard is met.

Summit County
Division of Building Standards
1030 East Tallmadge Avenue
Akron, Ohio 44310
Main Phone: (330) 630-7280

Office Hours
Monday - Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Inspections
Monday - Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
co.summitoh.net/departments/Building-Standards

