

Always Hire a Professional Contractor

No home inspection is ever “perfect” under the lens of a [quality home inspection](#) and in some cases, it is necessary to call in a professional to make something right with your new home. Getting the right contractor can make the difference between a great job at a fair price and paying for something that might need to be *re-done* (see our *lazy builder gallery below for when contractors got it wrong*).



What Contractor Skills do You Need?

Contractors have various skills and abilities. If your Inspection identified a major structural defect that needs repairs, you may need engineering work to be done and you will need a contractor who has an Engineer available for this work. If you need electrical work done, you will need a licensed electrical contractor, plumbing will require a ticketed plumber, etc.

Depending on the work being done and your municipality, your contractor may need to draw permits or drawings with the municipality. Ensure your contractor knows if permits are needed and that they will look after dealing with the municipality. Municipalities may require permits for plumbing changes, structure or room changes, electrical changes, adding a suite, building a deck, or even cutting down a tree...



Finding Good Contractors

What makes up a good contractor is a combination of both technical ability and the ability to clearly communicate with you, the client. Personal references are one of the best ways to find out about good contractors, as well as the BBB and City Hall. Your Home Inspector may also have suggestions on quality contractors in your area. No matter the source for the reference, always do some research online on perspective contractors to ensure they have a good reputation. Often, contractors can provide a reference for past work or can show pictures of past work so you can get an idea of the quality of their work.

Get at least three quotes from different contractors. Costs can vary by as much as 300% between different contractors based on what work each feels needs to be performed, the quality of the materials they propose using and the time and profit they expect to make. Don't presume the most expensive quote will be the best quality, either - as it may just be the contractor has the highest profit margin. Also, be cautious with the lowest price as they may not have the proper skills, insurance, permits, or quality of building materials that you require for the job to be done right.



A good contractor will put a warranty on their work and will tell you if they are doing the work themselves or sub-contracting to another contractor(s). Make sure everyone on their crew and any sub-contracted crew is covered by [WorkSafe BC](#) or you may find yourself personally liable for any injuries on the job. Make sure they will put everything in writing including a written quote.

What to Watch for When Hiring Contractors

Being diligent in the details of your hiring process will help you make sure you get a good contractor. The areas you will be most concerned with once the job starts are:

Getting the job done correctly - Unscrupulous contractors may try and change the critical *scope of work* after they get the deposit or bring in crews or materials that are sub-standard. A good contractor will have no problems putting all the details you want in writing. Not doing so may require a good Lawyer...

Getting the job done on time - Once a contractor has your deposit and has started the job, it is very difficult for you to change contractors. A good contractor has no problem putting start dates, key milestone dates and completion dates in writing. A good contract – balanced and good for both parties - will have consequences for missing such...

Getting the job done on budget - Prices for labour and materials should not change under the original scope of work but unexpected costs do happen. A good contractor will have no problem putting in writing how you will deal with unexpected costs such as \$/hour of labour and markup on materials. They will also understand who approves the additional work.



Never pay for a job completely up front. However, it is not unusual for a good contractor to request a substantial deposit before starting work on a project. A pre-work deposit should be not be more than 15% of the total project cost. On longer jobs, set up a payment schedule based on milestone completion stages, while holding back about min. 10% of the payment for final completion of the job and always have a title-search done.



Be very cautious when dealing with contractors that only want to do a 'cash' job or only have a price that is good 'only for today'. They likely do not have permits or any insurance for the work they are doing and if something is not completed correctly, you have very little recourse.

Never pay anyone cash in advance for any work to be completed or even pay cash for a deposit. Cheques and credit cards have an accounting trail that can help you and possibly investigators look into fraudulent contractors.

After Hiring a Contractor

Get your deal in writing. On small jobs, an email exchange with the details may be fine, but for very large jobs, you may want to consider having a lawyer review your agreement. At minimum you want to have in writing:

What work is to be performed

Quality of Materials to be used (*be as specific as possible*)

Start Dates, Milestone Dates and Completion Dates

Price for work performed in full and a payment schedule

A declaration from the builder they will conform to all required permits and insurance needs and that all their staff and sub-contractors will have the correct training as needed for the work to be done safely.

Written Warranties on the work performed



A good contractor will keep you informed of the progress of your job before and during the work. Don't be surprised when unexpected issues come up that may require additional costs. This is a common issue in renovations and repairs and the reason why you should have additional labour and material costs in your agreement. Occasionally, even a good contractor

may not be able to complete or start work on time. Use your best judgement on what is reasonable to accommodate. Ensure a change-order is in-place (in writing)...

If your contractor cannot meet expectations and agreements beyond what you can accommodate, it is important for you to document your interactions with the contractor and to make very clear your expectations in writing with a compliance date. If your contractor still cannot meet expectations and agreements, be prepared to cancel your agreement with legal advice if needed. We can also help document deficiencies for legal claims.

After the Work is Done...

After the job is complete, you may want to contact your [Home Inspector](#) to re-inspect after the work is done, especially on a large project. Most have an hourly consulting fee for this type of work and you get the peace of mind that the work was done correctly and your home is safe and solid. You wouldn't want to void your insurance, right !?

Lastly, be an honest and appreciative Client. Mutual respect goes both ways. Pay your bills on time and if you liked your contractor, recommend them to friends and family and go online and say something nice about them to help future clients know they can be trusted to do a good job...

