

## Ten Tips for Hiring a Contractor

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Whether you are considering a small remodeling project, or a large condominium reconstruction, here are 10-tips you should consider when selecting and hiring a contractor:

1. **Plan Your Project Carefully**  
Insist that you approve the completed plans prior to the start of work. Study the plans carefully to ensure they illustrate your project accurately
2. **Shop Around**  
Obtain at least three written bids and do not automatically accept the lowest. Be wary of “special deals,” demonstration projects, or any bid that sounds too good to be true.
3. **Check the Contractor’s License**  
Depending upon your state’s law, contractors may be required to be licensed. If they are, ask to see their “license pocket card” along with another form of identification.
4. **Check Contractor’s References**  
Before hiring a contractor, ask for references. Check with previous customers. We typically recommend you ask for the last three projects the contractor worked on. Find out if these customers were satisfied with the contractor’s work, how the contractor responded to questions, problems, or complaints. If possible, personally check work previously performed. If you have any doubts about the contractors financial stability, ask for financial references.
5. **Hire a Licensed Contractor**  
As mentioned above, not all contractors are required to be licensed. However, if having electrical or plumbing work performed, a license will be required.
6. **Get Everything in Writing**  
If you make changes to your original plans, write down each change, even if minor, and have your contractor sign or initial the change.
7. **Understand the Contract**  
A written contract protects both you and the contractor. Put all agreements in writing and avoid oral promises. Ensure the contract includes:
  - A list of materials to be used, specifying the quality, quantity, weight, color, size, or brand name.
  - A starting date and a completion date.
  - The total price, a payment schedule, and whether there is a cancellation penalty.
  - Everything you feel is important to the project, such as specific materials, complete clean up and removal of debris, and any special requests.
  - A list of exactly what the contractor will and will not do.
8. **Inspect the Work**  
Check to ensure the work has been done to your satisfaction. If unsure the work has been properly performed, have inspected by another contractor, the State Contractors Licensing Board or your local building department.
9. **Pay Directly and Correctly**  
Have the contractor supply a list of all subcontractors and material suppliers that will work on the project. Be certain you obtain a lien release from the contractor, each subcontractor, and material supplier.
10. **Know Your Warranty**  
Generally contractors provide a one-year warranty. Ensure you make any warranty claims in writing as soon as a problem arises. Despite the one-year warranty, a contractor’s liability for constructional defects may extend beyond the first year. In any case, do not wait to make a claim upon your contractor or to consult an attorney.

Doug Benson founded the firm of Benson & Associates PC, which specializes in representing homeowners and associations in construction defect litigation. If you have additional questions, or you would like to speak with Mr. Benson, you may contact him at (720) 898-9680 x1 or via email at [doug@bensonpc.com](mailto:doug@bensonpc.com). You may also visit the firm’s website at [www.bensonpc.com](http://www.bensonpc.com).