



**Neighborhood Energy Connection**  
*making energy conservation easy*

# Tips for Hiring a Contractor

## Study up

Find out about license and insurance requirements for contractors in your state and make sure that permits are secured if required by your city. Ask your contractor for proof that they have what the state requires. Sometimes your contractor will pull the needed construction permits, and other times you will; talk this over with your contractor.

## Pick a contractor who specializes in your project type

Research contractors to find out if they have experience in the type of project they'll be doing. Many projects are regulated and code-specific that you want someone who knows the details of what's required. For example, if you are insulating your attic, ask the contractor if they use a blower door to find and seal air leaks before insulating.

## Ask for referrals

Ask family, friends, neighbors and co-workers for contractor referrals. You can also contact local trade organizations, the [Department of Labor](#), the [Better Business Bureau](#), or consumer ratings businesses such as [Angie's list](#) for referrals.

## Call references

Ask contractors for customer references and call them. Ask about the contractor's installation practices, any over charges, response to customer requests, and overall work quality. Determine the customer's all around satisfaction with the contractor.

## Expect a personal consultation

The contractor should spend significant time talking with you about your needs, wants, and scope of work for the project. Ask questions until you understand the entire plan. A contractor should be able to answer your questions satisfactorily and in a manner that puts you at ease.

## Get the contractor into your home

Never proceed on any job with verbal bids or bids that are made without an onsite contractor evaluation at your home.

## Get bids

Get multiple bids so you can compare price, quality of materials, down payment required and time frame for completion. Specify the job in detail so that bidding contractors provide "apples to apples" bids. Remember, the lowest price may not always been the best bid.

## Get it in ink

Sign a written proposal with a contractor before work gets started. It'll protect you by specifying project costs, brands of items being installed, job schedule, and warranty information.

## Find out who's performing the work

Will the person you're hiring be doing the work, or will it be subcontracted to someone else? Larger jobs such as additions and major kitchen remodels often involve multiple subcontractors, such as electricians and plumbers. General contractors often subcontract specialty jobs to other pros.

## Pass it on

Tell your friends and family about your contractor if you were please with the finished job. The best way to thank your contractor is with referrals.

## References

[ENERGY STAR: 10 Tips for Hiring a Heating and Cooling Contractor](#)

[MSN Real Estate: 10 Tips for Hiring a Contractor](#)

[MN Dept. of Commerce: Hiring a Residential Contractor - What You Need to Know](#)