

## Questions to ask a Remodeler

Finding a remodeler who is right for you is not as simple as picking up the Yellow Pages. On a large project, you may find yourself working closely with the individual for several months, so you want to do everything you can to ensure you are making the right decision. Did you know that most people spend more time shopping for and buying a car than they do on choosing a remodeling company?

1. **Are you licensed?** Most states require contractors, even subcontractors, to be licensed. Make sure your contractor is properly licensed. If a contractor cannot produce a valid license, **DO NOT HIRE THEM!!** You can check the contractor's current licensing status with your Secretary of State.
2. **Do you carry general liability insurance?** Make sure the contractor carries general liability insurance. This type of insurance protects your property in case of damage caused by the contractor and/or his employees. The insurance company will pay for the cost of replacing and/or repairing any damage that occurs. Make sure the contractor provides you with a certificate of insurance.
3. **Do you use sub-contractors and do you use a sub-contractor agreement?** This is EXTREMELY important, because you do not know these folks and sometimes do not meet them until it is time for them to do their part of the project.
  - a. Ask how long the sub-contractor has worked with the company.
  - b. Ask how the company verifies the sub-contractor's insurance.
  - c. Ask if they use a sub-contractor agreement. A subcontractor agreement protects you and the company from below average companies, **ask for a copy.**
4. **Are you a member of the NAHB?** NAHB stands for National Association of Home Builder's. It is always a good idea to consider hiring an NAHB contractor. In most cases, this organization attracts conscientious contractors who are interested in bettering the industry and weeding out unprofessional contractors. In order to become a member, the contractor's background and references are thoroughly investigated.
5. **Are you a member of the BBB? (Better Business Bureau)** The goal of the BBB is to foster a fair and effective marketplace, so that buyers and sellers and trust each other ("Start With Trust"). Many BBB services can be accessed online through their [website](#).
6. **Do you guarantee your work?** Your contractor should agree to guarantee his work for at least one year from the completion date. They should also include any warranties from the material used, if applicable.
7. **Who will be in charge of the job?** Make sure the contractor or his crew is on the job whenever work is being performed, especially if sub-contractors will be used, unless it has been communicated that the sub-contractors do not need to be supervised. In some cases, sub-contractors come do work without a company representative present

which is OK, as long as question #4 is answered to your satisfaction. If you want the contractor or one of the crew there at all times, expect to pay for this service. The responsible party must be familiar with every aspect of your project. You cannot be worried about what is going on when you are not there.

8. **Will you provide me with written references?** A good contractor will be more than happy to provide you with references. You should search for a well-established contractor who can give you several customer references.
9. **How do you handle “dirty work?”** Construction is dirty and dusty! It gets everywhere, especially if any sanding is being done. Make sure the contractor will make an honest effort to keep the dust contained, or notify you when operations generating heavy dust are going to take place so you can cover furniture or move sensitive belongings. Make sure the contractor agrees to sweep and place all construction debris in a predetermined place or refuse container at the end of every day.
10. **What else should I think about in doing a project like this?** Any reputable contractor will have at least one or multiple “Pre-Construction Meetings.” These meetings are to outline things like:
  - a. Gaining access to the site.
  - b. Dust.
  - c. Hours of work.
  - d. Pets.
  - e. Children.
  - f. Breaks.
  - g. Lunch time.
  - h. Staging of material.
  - i. Parking.
  - j. Prepping the space:
    - i. What do I need to pack up?
    - ii. What will you move?
  - k. Conduct of workers.
  - l. Smoking issues.
11. **How long will a project like this take?**
12. **How many projects like this have you done in the past?**

#### **Bottom Line:**

Do you feel comfortable with this company? Go with your gut. A strong rapport and close communication with your remodeler will help make any job go well. Remodeling is a very personal process. The remodeler you hire will be part of your home life for several weeks or months, so it is important to make sure that your personalities work well together.