

**FOUR**

QUESTIONS TO ASK  
A CONTRACTOR

...



**BEFORE**

THEY START WORK  
ON YOUR HOME





## We've all had bad experiences with home-repair contractors at one time or another.

They cancel appointments or show up late. They don't clean up after the job is done. Maybe they spring an unexpected charge on you, forcing you to pay more than the estimate. Regardless of the situation, once a contractor has started work, you typically feel as if you have to see it through, no matter what happens. After all, you don't want to leave a job half done, right? And this means they have you over the proverbial barrel.

There's an easy way to avoid a lot of the pitfalls of hiring a plumber, electrician, roofer or just about any other kind of home-repair contractor. And that is to ask them a few simple questions before you hire them.



# ONE

## How long have you been in business?

This is an important one. Expertise is gained chiefly through experience. That means, the longer a contractor has been in business, the better they are likely to be at their job.

You need to ask them about the specific task you're hiring them for, however. Just because they started business in 1987, it doesn't necessarily mean they've been repairing foundations since 1987. The other primary benefit of a company that's been around for a long time is, it's likely they've earned a good reputation with homeowners. After all, if you're incompetent or dishonest, it's not likely you will be successful over the long run.



**TWO**

### How many employees do you have?

Company size isn't always an indicator of competence, but it's more likely that a contractor that has at least a few job-specific employees is serious about his or her business and can handle repairs of a larger scale.

When it comes to repairing a concrete driveway, for instance, you really want someone who has a lot of experience with concrete lifting instead of a Jack-of-all-trades who does a little bit of concrete, a little bit of plumbing, etc. More employees also indicates that the company is able to function as a legitimate business over time. This, too, speaks to its competence and commitment to fixing your home right, the first time.

**THREE**

### Are you accredited?

Depending on your state, contractors need to be licensed for them to charge money for their services. Beyond that, most respectable contractors seek accreditation from organizations

such as the Better Business Bureau or the local chamber of commerce. This indicates that they're a legitimate business with satisfied customers. You can also check reviews on sites such as Google, Yelp, Angie's List and Home Advisor. And don't just look at overall ratings; check individual reviews. A one-star review could indicate an incompetent contractor, but it could also indicate a difficult and unreasonable customer.

## FOUR

### Do you offer a warranty?

This is a big one. The best home-repair contractors stand behind their work with some sort of guarantee.

This should not only assure your satisfaction, it should also be transferable to the new owners, should you sell

your home, depending on the type of work being done. A contractor who offers a written warranty on the work they do is demonstrating they aren't some fly-by-night operation that will disappear the moment you hand them a check. Be especially careful regarding contractors who travel from location to location after severe weather events such as hail or flooding. They might offer low prices, but it's likely they won't be reachable should something go wrong with their work.



### Above all, use common sense when hiring a contractor.

Pay attention to how they speak and act. Do they seem eager to help you? Are they polite? Do they treat you with respect? By asking these questions and paying close attention to a contractor's attitude, you can go a long way to ensuring that you have a positive experience. And if we all do this consistently, we might just be able to raise the bar for the whole contracting industry. *After all, don't we deserve better?*