
Questions to Ask Before Selecting a Contractor

How long have you been in business? The longer the company has been in business, the more experience they have gained. However, there are also many highly-skilled start-up companies.

Is your company a full-service or specialty firm? For a complicated repair, you may need a specialist. For simpler work, general services may be sufficient.

What is your approach to a project of this scope? This answer should reveal the contractor's preservation philosophy and his or her level of familiarity with projects such as yours.

What is the timetable for this project? Make sure you know when the job will start, how long the job is expected to take as well as what hours the crew will work.

How many people will be working on this project, and how are they employed? Many professionals rely on subcontractors, while others have a variety of laborers under their constant employ. Ask about warranties and guarantees and about who is responsible for the subcontractors.

Will we need a permit for this project? Most cities and towns require permits for building projects. Decide who will secure the appropriate permissions before you begin.

Additionally, you should ask for:

A list of three or more references for projects like yours. Ask the references if they were satisfied with the outcome, what they would do differently next time, and would they use the contractor again. Your friends and neighbors are also a good source of recommendations, or may know of projects not on the contractor's reference list.

Proof of state workman's compensation coverage and liability insurance certificate. Check with your insurance agent about your project.

Finally, make sure you are comfortable with the person you plan on hiring. Whether a project is simple or complex, good communication and trust are important ingredients.

Credits: This information comes from the Preservation Alliance's *Old House and Barn Directory* of preservation professionals serving NH. Purchase a copy on our website.



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