



Remodeling 101

**TYPES OF BUILDING PRO'S
CONTRACTOR CHECKLIST
REFERENCE QUESTIONS
CONTRACTS**

There are many different reasons people choose to remodel. Maybe you've purchased a new house that you love – but it lacks the kitchen amenities that you need. Or possibly a family member is moving in or returning home. Or perhaps, your home has suffered damage from a recent storm. Whether you need to recreate one room or renovate your entire house, it's essential to carefully plan your remodeling project. Outside of buying your home, remodeling it may be the single biggest investment you make. You need to know that the remodeling professional that you choose is a full-time, dedicated remodeling professional.

There are many types of professionals within the home improvement field that could come to your aid.

The General Contractor: Many home improvement projects do not require professional design services and can best be handled by the experienced remodeling contractor whose knowledge of materials and methods has been gained by years on the job. Again, be sure to deal with a professional. Even though the job may be relatively small, its successful completion is important to you. Small jobs also need careful planning and attention to detail. General contractors are also the right choice for your project if you have had your project designed by an architect or designer and you now need someone to manage the construction of those designs.

For design services, your options include:

The Architect: Major remodeling projects require construction drawings for the purposes of defining a contract and procuring permits. In cases where your professional remodeler does not provide design services, you may wish to seek the assistance of a professionally trained architect. It is best to work with an architect experienced in remodeling—he or she will be more sensitive to the special challenges that remodeling presents. Architects are licensed by the state and have formal education and experience. They have overall knowledge of design; however, many architects do not accept smaller projects.

The Designer: Another option to obtain those construction drawings is to hire a certified or licensed designer. Designers may have expertise in specific areas of the home such as kitchens, interiors, baths, space design, etc. They often specialize in particular types of projects and may be the best choice for a targeted remodeling project.

The Design/Build Contractor: If you prefer to hire only one company for design and construction services, your best bet may be to hire a design/build firm. Design/build is a concept developed to benefit the remodeling homeowner by providing both quality design and construction services within the same general contracting company. A design/build contractor will be able to see your project through from start to finish, keeping design, engineering and budget in mind. Some design/build firms have architects on staff, others use certified designers.

You may want to use this checklist after you meet with a prospective contractor.

Here are just a few items to consider.

Contractor Name & Contact Info



Was the Contractor / Salesperson on time? Yes No

Was their appearance neat and professional? Yes No

Was their vehicle presentable? Yes No

Did they have a presentation book / photos, visual presentation? Yes No

Did they listen to your ideas / ask questions about your needs? Yes No

Did they suggest options / alternatives / ideas? Yes No

Do they have insurance (Liability & Workman's Compensation)? Yes No

How many years have they been in business, under their current name? _____ years

Are they a member of any trade organizations? Yes No

Are they members of any other organizations? Yes No

Do they have any continuing education/certification designations? Yes No

Do they have a Website? Yes No

Request a list of references (see questions to ask references on next page) and follow up!

References checked? Yes No



To protect yourself, always check the contractor's references. This is an essential stage of qualifying the right person for your project. Here are a few questions to ask previous customers:

Contractor Name & Contact Info _____

Reference Name & Contact Info _____

What type of project was done? (kitchen, dormer, deck, repairs,...) _____

When was the project completed? _____

- 1. Is the contractor related to you? Yes No
 - 2. Could you communicate well with the remodeler? Yes No
 - 3. Were you pleased with the quality of work? Yes No
 - 4. Were you satisfied with the remodeler's business practices? Was the remodeler professional, ethical, honest and fair throughout the process? Yes No
 - 5. Did the crew show up on time? Yes No
 - 6. Was the job site kept clean during the project? Yes No
 - 7. Were the contractor, crew, and subcontractors polite and courteous to you and your family? Were you and your property treated with respect? Were you comfortable with them in your home/ leaving them alone in your home? Yes No
 - 8. Was the job completed on schedule? Yes No
 - 9. Did the remodeler fulfill his or her contract? Yes No
 - 10. Did the contractor stay in touch and visit the site throughout the project? Yes No
 - 11. Were the final details finished in a timely manner? Yes No
 - 12. Did any issues / complaints arise during the project? Yes No
- How did the remodeler handle them? _____
- 13. Was the price you were quoted on the contract, the same as what you charged? Yes No
 - If not, was it because you made changes, or selected more expensive products than were specified or more than the specified allowance? Yes No
 - 14. Did the Contractor offer ideas and innovative suggestions for the project? Yes No
 - 15. Would you use the remodeler again without hesitation? Yes No

CONTRACTS

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE YOU SIGN

- All contracts should have the following information: Name, address and phone numbers (preferably typed).
- Detailed Specifications - particular items should include manufacturer and model number (ex: Moen lavatory faucet # 4621 in chrome) or an allowance (ex: \$125 lavatory faucet allowance).
- Payment terms and schedule should be outlined.
- REQUIRE “change orders” in writing for anything that is not in the original contract (even if for \$0 or a credit). This will ensure no surprises when the final payment is due. Payment for change orders is typically 50% when signed/50% when complete
- Obtain a Certificate of Insurance which should come from the contractor’s agent or insurance company, and should name you as a certificate holder.
- Obtain a copy of Workman’s Comp (if they are required to have it) & Liability Limits
- If your home was built before 1978 ask for “The Lead-Safe Certified Guide to Renovate Right” brochure. The EPA requires contractors working in homes built before 1978 to register their company and complete an 8-hour training and certification course on how to prevent harmful lead exposure if a renovation disturbs painted surfaces – IT’S THE LAW
- Review and understand the contract completely. It never hurts to have an attorney review the contract. This is especially important for large projects.
- Right of Rescission – you can cancel within 3 business days without penalty if you signed the contract at your home and away from the contractor’s permanent and fixed place of business.



If it is not in the contract, it’s NOT included!