Contractor Checklist

A contractor checklist for hiring and vetting a general contractor before you sign.

Define your project

- [ ] Write a clear scope of work and project goals.
- [ ] Set a realistic budget and contingency.
- [ ] Establish your desired start and completion dates.
- [ ] Gather drawings, plans or design references.
- [ ] List must-have materials, finishes or standards.
- [ ] Decide which decisions you want input on versus delegated.

License and credentials

- [ ] Confirm the contractor holds an active, valid license.
- [ ] Verify the license with your state or local board.
- [ ] Check the license type matches your project scope.
- [ ] Confirm the business is properly registered.
- [ ] Look up any disciplinary actions or complaints.
- [ ] Verify relevant certifications for specialized work.

Insurance and bonding

- [ ] Request a current certificate of general liability insurance.
- [ ] Confirm workers' compensation coverage for their crew.
- [ ] Verify coverage limits are adequate for your project.
- [ ] Ask whether the contractor is bonded.
- [ ] Confirm subcontractors are also insured.
- [ ] Obtain insurance certificates directly from the insurer.
  Verify coverage is active for the full project period before work begins.

References and track record

- [ ] Request at least three recent client references.
- [ ] Call references and ask about quality, communication and timeline.
- [ ] Visit a current or completed job site if possible.
- [ ] Review photos of past projects similar to yours.
- [ ] Check online reviews and ratings for patterns.
- [ ] Ask about their experience with projects like yours.

Bids and comparison

- [ ] Provide all bidders the same detailed scope.
- [ ] Collect at least three written, itemized bids.
- [ ] Compare line items, allowances and exclusions.

- [ ] Question bids that are unusually high or low.
- [ ] Confirm what is and isn't included in each price.
- [ ] Clarify the proposed timeline and crew availability.

Contract and agreement

- [ ] Get the full scope, price and schedule in writing.
- [ ] Define the payment schedule tied to milestones.
- [ ] Set a clear change-order process and pricing.
- [ ] Confirm warranty terms and what they cover.
- [ ] Include lien waiver and dispute-resolution provisions.
- [ ] Read every clause and seek legal review for large projects.