

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.