

What to Look For in a Contractor and Where to Look

When seeking the services of either a general or specialized contractor for your renovation project, there are important guidelines that you should follow:

- A good candidate should have expertise in the type of renovation that you are undertaking. If remodeling a bathroom, you will obviously need the services of an experienced plumber to move or add new plumbing lines and fixtures. The specialized contractor should have required licensing and certification in their field.
- A reliable contractor will carry up-to-date contractor's insurance.
- The contractor should have numerous references and recommendations.
- Look for a contractor without violations or legitimate complaints on record at the local building authority.
- Most good contractors will be in high demand; contracting their services and arranging project timelines may need to be done well in advance.

Where to Look

There are several different resources available for finding a reliable contractor:

- Word of mouth references from friends, relatives, or neighbors who have recently had a home renovation project completed.
- Local building authorities.
- Local classified or yellow page advertisements.
- Local building or trade associations.
- Online Internet contractor locating services that help project owners connect with local service provider members. Some offer their services free to project owners. Two reliable resources are www.handycanadian.com for Canadian contractor-to-project owner services, and www.handyamerican.com for USA contractor-to-project owner services. A rule of thumb is that a candidate should live in close proximity to your area. Once you have assembled a list of likely candidates, use telephone interviews to fine tune the list.

Tell each candidate where you live, and offer general information about your plans in order to discover whether or not they would be interested in undertaking the project. Include such information as type and extent of renovation and remodeling that needs to be done, expected budget, and desired start and completion timetables.