

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE HIRING A CONTRACTOR

15 Questions That Can Help Protect Your Project Before You Sign

USE THIS BEFORE YOU HIRE.

A contractor interview should help you understand more than price. Use these questions to evaluate experience, documentation, scope, supervision, communication, payment expectations, and project closeout. Record the answers and investigate anything that is unclear or inconsistent.

CMP TIP: Do not automatically choose the lowest price. Compare the scope, materials, exclusions, schedule, documentation, and the contractor's answers as a whole.

1. Have you completed projects similar to mine?

Ask for examples that match your project's type, size, and complexity. Relevant experience helps you judge whether the contractor understands the work you are planning.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES

CMP QUICK CHECK: ☐ Clear / Documented ☐ Need More Information ☐ Concern / Red Flag

2. Can you provide recent customer references?

Ask for recent customers with similar projects. When you call, ask about communication, budget, schedule, problem-solving, workmanship, and whether they would hire the contractor again.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES

CMP QUICK CHECK: ☐ Clear / Documented ☐ Need More Information ☐ Concern / Red Flag

3. What licenses or registrations are required for my project, and do you hold them?

Requirements vary by trade and jurisdiction. Verify applicable credentials with the appropriate state or local authority rather than relying only on a verbal statement.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES

CMP QUICK CHECK: ☐ Clear / Documented ☐ Need More Information ☐ Concern / Red Flag

4. What insurance do you carry, and can I see current proof?

Ask for current documentation of insurance applicable to the work. Confirm names, policy dates, and coverage information rather than accepting only 'yes, we're insured.'

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES
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5. Who will actually perform the work?

Find out whether the work will be performed by employees, subcontractors, or both, and who is responsible for coordinating them.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES
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6. Who will supervise my project day to day?

Get the name or role of the person responsible for daily supervision, communication, decisions, and resolving jobsite issues.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES
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7. Who is responsible for permits and inspections?

Determine what permits or inspections may apply and who is responsible for obtaining and coordinating them. Put the responsibility in writing.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES
CMP QUICK CHECK: ☐ Clear / Documented ☐ Need More Information ☐ Concern / Red Flag

8. Can you give me a detailed written estimate and scope of work?

Look for a clear description of the work, important materials or allowances, price, timing assumptions, and other key project details.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES
CMP QUICK CHECK: ☐ Clear / Documented ☐ Need More Information ☐ Concern / Red Flag

9. What is NOT included in your price?

Ask specifically about exclusions. A low price may not include every task, material, cleanup item, repair, or service you expect.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES
CMP QUICK CHECK: ☐ Clear / Documented ☐ Need More Information ☐ Concern / Red Flag

10. What is the expected start date and project duration?

Ask when work can realistically begin, how long it should take, and what circumstances could materially affect the schedule.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES
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11. What is the payment schedule?

Understand the deposit, progress payments, milestones, and final payment. Avoid paying the entire project price upfront.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES
CMP QUICK CHECK: ☐ Clear / Documented ☐ Need More Information ☐ Concern / Red Flag

12. How will changes and additional costs be approved?

Ask how change orders are documented, priced, approved, and how they may affect the schedule. When practical, changes should be approved before the changed work proceeds.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES
CMP QUICK CHECK: ☐ Clear / Documented ☐ Need More Information ☐ Concern / Red Flag

13. How will you communicate with me during the project?

Identify the main contact, preferred communication method, expected update frequency, and how urgent issues or decisions will be handled.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES
CMP QUICK CHECK: ☐ Clear / Documented ☐ Need More Information ☐ Concern / Red Flag

14. What warranties apply to workmanship and materials?

Ask what is covered, who provides the warranty, how long it lasts, important exclusions, and how a warranty issue should be reported.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES

CMP QUICK CHECK: ☐ Clear / Documented ☐ Need More Information ☐ Concern / Red Flag

15. What happens before I make final payment?

Ask about the final walkthrough, punch-list items, cleanup, applicable inspections or approvals, warranties, closeout documents, and the conditions for final payment.

CONTRACTOR'S ANSWER / NOTES

CMP QUICK CHECK: ☐ Clear / Documented ☐ Need More Information ☐ Concern / Red Flag

BEFORE YOU HIRE - FINAL REVIEW

- ☐ I understand the proposed scope of work.
- ☐ I understand what is excluded from the price.
- ☐ I understand the price and payment structure.
- ☐ I understand the expected schedule.
- ☐ I know who will supervise the project.
- ☐ I have reviewed applicable insurance documentation.
- ☐ I have checked applicable licensing or registration requirements.
- ☐ I understand responsibility for permits and inspections.
- ☐ I understand the change-order process.
- ☐ I have reviewed references and/or relevant past work.
- ☐ I understand applicable workmanship and material warranties.
- ☐ Important promises and expectations are in writing.

MY CONTRACTOR SCREENING STATUS

GREEN - READY TO CONSIDER Major questions have been satisfactorily answered and key documentation reviewed.	YELLOW - GET CLARIFICATION Important questions remain unanswered or documentation needs verification.	RED - STOP & REVIEW Material information is missing, inconsistent, unusually pressured, or raises concerns.
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QUICK RED-FLAG CHECK

- ☐ Pressure to sign immediately or refusal to let you review documents.
- ☐ Large or full upfront payment demands.
- ☐ Blank spaces or vague descriptions in contracts.
- ☐ Unwillingness to provide requested references or applicable documentation.
- ☐ An unusually low bid without a clear explanation.
- ☐ Important promises that the contractor refuses to put in writing.
- ☐ Inconsistent answers about scope, supervision, materials, schedule, or payment.

STILL NOT SURE ABOUT THE CONTRACTOR?

Don't guess with your project. The CMP Project Advocate can help you identify information that may still be missing and determine an appropriate next step.

Ask the CMP Project Advocate | Talk to a Real Person: (214) 609-7523 | sales@cmppartnersllc.org

Educational Resource Notice: This guide provides general educational information and is not a contractor certification, approval, legal opinion, insurance determination, code review, or guarantee of project performance. Licensing, permitting, insurance, lien, contract, and other requirements vary by trade, project, and jurisdiction.

Research basis: CMP condensed consumer-protection principles reflected in Federal Trade Commission guidance and Texas consumer guidance, including written estimates, references, applicable credentials, insurance documentation, written contracts, payment safeguards, warranties, and project closeout. CMP's

question-and-screening format is an original educational framework created for homeowners.