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How to Choose a Good Handyman

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If you're a homeowner, chances are that sooner or later you'll find yourself working with a handyman to whittle down a long list of small home repair projects, like hanging a door or replacing a leaky faucet. Since your home is your number one asset, it's crucial to find a reliable, trustworthy handyman who you can put your confidence in to do the job right. A good handyman will come recommended, perform high-quality work at reasonable rates, and, first and foremost, be respectful of you and your home.

Method

1

Finding Good Candidates

1 Ask a friend or family member for a referral. Talk to your loved ones and see if they know anyone who they would recommend. Prompt them for detailed, honest feedback about the person's general character and professional standards, as well as their performance. Most homeowners will have hired outside help at least once or twice and will therefore be able to make a dependable recommendation.^[1]

- Getting a referral from the people closest to you is perhaps the best way to track down a good handyman, as you'll know right off the bat that you can trust the individual in question to deliver on their end of the arrangement.

2 Hunt for a handyman who fits the bill online. Online business review websites like HomeAdvisor and Angie's List offer paying users directories of many different types of service professionals, including handymen. Similarly, customer feedback-centered sites like Yelp can be helpful for getting a sense of what kind of work a contractor does. Look for a handyman with a high star rating or positive reviews that speak to their timeliness, know-how, and general professionalism.^[2]

- Be specific about the type of help you're looking for in your search terms. If you just need someone to lend a hand with various projects, you can probably get away with a general search like "handyman." If you have a problem with your roof or plumbing, you'll be better off seeking out a specialist in one of these fields.^[3]
- These days, many handymen have their own websites where they advertise their services. While perusing a handyman's website can provide you with useful info, third-party feedback is always a better way to assess the quality and value of their work.

Tip: If you don't have any luck on any of the big-name business review sites, there are also many lesser-known resources that you can explore, such as Thumbtack, Porch, Kudzu, and Houzz.^[4]

3 Read reviews and seek suggestions on community home repair forums. While you're online, see if the place you live has a community page that you can browse for referrals. Many newer neighborhoods and apartment complexes, for instance, have message boards where residents can share details of their experiences with handymen they've used in the past. One of these posts could be the next best thing to a word-of-mouth recommendation if you don't know anyone who might be able to give you a

promising lead.^[5]

- Another option is to go through an app like Nextdoor or EveryBlock, which essentially serve as private social networks for the residents of a given neighborhood.^[6]
- One of the biggest advantages of getting the name of a handyman through a community forum is that you know they've already done work on homes similar to yours.

4 Contact a local handyman company for quick and easy jobs. If you just need one or two things fixed and you're not too insistent about getting a personal referral, consider simply calling one of the handyman services in your neck of the woods. Most towns have at least a couple of businesses that loan subcontracted workers out for small projects, like replacing broken tile or fixing a damaged deck railing.^[7]

- Make sure that the company offers the service you need before you call. Handymen are trained to perform a wide variety of tasks, but may not have the expertise needed to tackle more specialized projects, such as building a carport or rewiring an electrical outlet.^[8]
- It's also advisable to read the fine print in the company's terms of service. They may charge hidden fees or expect the homeowner to cover the cost of necessary tools and materials.

5 Scan the bulletin board at your local hardware store. If you're not having any success with online resources, head to the nearest hardware store or home improvement center and take a look at the bulletin board posted near the entrance. It's not uncommon to find flyers and business cards for independent contractors looking for work in these places. Store employees may also be able to offer recommendations for handymen they've supplied in the past.^[9]

- Don't forget to take a tear slip or jot down the person's contact info so you can get in touch with them later if you decide to interview them for the job.
- Before you hire a freelance handyman, plug their name into a search engine to see if you can dig up any reviews from former employers.

- Some larger home improvement centers like The Home Depot even offer in-house handyman services for select projects through their Home Services department.^[10]

Method**2****Choosing the Right Person for the Job**

1 Check your prospects for past or pending complaints. In the U.S., it's possible for employers to report contracted workers for scams, lawsuits, and other grievances through the website of the Better Business Bureau. Do some research on each of your leading candidates prior to submitting an estimate for your project. If any major complaints have been registered against them, consider going with your second choice instead.^[11]

- Hiring a handyman without doing your due diligence could set you up for a major headache, or even leave you vulnerable to theft.

2 Request estimates from multiple handymen to narrow down your options. Once you've rounded up a few different handymen who you think might suit your needs, have them come to your home and bid on your project individually. Not only will this allow you to compare pricing and find the rate that best fits your budget, it will also give you the chance to meet with them face-to-face, discover how punctual they are, and get a feel for their professional etiquette.^[12]

- Keep in mind that there are more factors involved in shopping around estimates than just price. The lowest bid will usually be the most attractive, of course, but you may ultimately be more inclined to work with the person who was timeliest and most considerate.^[13]
- A thorough, detailed bid is often a sign of competence and integrity. If a handyman takes the time to break down the cost associated with each step of the project, it shows that they care about doing things the right way and not just collecting a paycheck.

3 Interview your candidates personally. Set up a time to meet with the handymen who have caught your eye and discuss the project you're hiring them for in depth. Like the initial bid, this is a good opportunity to evaluate your prospects on both a personal and professional level while ironing out all the important details of the job.^[14]

- Come up with a list of questions to ask the handyman that will offer you a better idea of their qualifications. For example, you might ask them why they chose to become a handyman, how long they've been in the business, or what their greatest strengths are.^[15]

4 Ask the handyman to provide a list of references. Any handyman who's worth their salt will be able to produce testimonials from satisfied clients who they've done work for previously. Handymen who come prepared with their own set of references are usually a safe bet. If the person was also recommended to you personally by a friend or loved one, all the better.^[16]

- It's also a plus if the handyman can show you photos of similar jobs that they've completed in the past.
- Be wary of candidates who decline to give out the contact information of their references so that you can speak to them yourself. It may mean that they have something to hide.

5 Find out whether the handyman you're considering is properly insured. Handymen aren't typically required to be licensed, and bonding is usually only necessary on major home improvement jobs, like add-ons and full remodels. However, you always want to ask your handyman to supply proof of insurance up front. At the very least, some form of general liability insurance is crucial. Worker's compensation is also a must if the handyman has other employees working under them.^[17]

- Be sure to review your candidate's insurance policy along with the rest of their paperwork. A good general liability insurance policy will offer the contractor coverage for at least \$1 million per claim.^[18]
- When it comes to hiring a handyman, general liability insurance is non-negotiable, as it protects you from being saddled with legal responsibility if

an accident occurs on your property.

6 Make sure the handyman is willing to sign a detailed written contract. Once you've settled on a candidate, it's time to draw up a formal contract to seal the deal. Go over your written agreement with your handyman to recap and confirm each of the main provisions, including the general timeframe, estimated cost, and payment procedures. Don't sign the contract until you're satisfied with the terms it lays out.^[19]

- You should always request a contract if it's your first time working with a particular handyman, even for small weekend jobs.
- Your contract essentially says that the handyman promises to perform a set of agreed-upon duties in a specified time for a predetermined sum of money. A record like this can come in handy in the event that a dispute arises between you and your handyman.

Tip: If you don't want to go to the trouble of drafting up your own contract (or aren't sure how), you can find premade forms online to print and fill out.^[20]

7 See if the handyman offers a warranty on their services. Some handymen extend homeowners the benefit of a written warranty or similar guarantee in addition to the terms of a formal contract. This means that if the problem reoccurs or something goes wrong with a repair job within the specified warranty period, the handyman will come back and fix it at no additional cost. If the handyman you've chosen to work with offers a warranty, you can rest assured that your project is in good hands.^[21]

- One-year warranties are standard for most remodeling jobs and other large-scale projects.^[22]
- Warranties are a sign of good faith as much as they are a way of attracting business, and are generally useful for distinguishing honest contractors from less-than-honest ones.

Tips

- A handyman is not the same thing as a general contractor. Handymen are typically trained to perform a wide variety of small jobs, like basic installations and repairs. By contrast, the main role of a contractor is to oversee major construction projects and renovations that are too big for homeowners to handle on their own.
- As a general rule, the busier the handyman, the more reliable they are. A full schedule indicates that their services are in high-demand.
- Depending on your local laws and the size of your project, you may need a building permit or similar authorization before you can get started. Talk to your handyman about securing the whatever permits are necessary to move things forward.

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References

1. <https://livingonthecheap.com/how-to-hire-handyman/>
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