



General tips for hiring contractors include:

1. **Get a written estimate:** Compare services and prices before making a final decision. Also, read the fine print. Some contractors charge a fee for a written estimate, which is often applied to the cost of subsequent repairs.
2. **Check references:** Contractors should be willing to provide names of previous customers. Call several former customers who had similar work done to make sure they were satisfied with the job.
3. **Ask for proof of insurance:** Make sure the contractor carries general liability insurance and workers' compensation. If the contractor is not insured, the homeowner may be liable for accidents that occur on the property. Check with your local municipality to verify they are registered and insured.
4. **Use reliable, licensed contractors:** Call your local Better Business Bureau to inquire about a business before signing a contract.
5. **Insist on a written contract:** A complete contract should clearly state all tasks to be performed, all associated costs and the payment schedule. Never sign a blank contract or one with blank spaces. Make sure the contract clearly states who will pay for all materials and will apply for the necessary permits or licenses. Have a lawyer review the contract if substantial costs are involved, and keep a copy for your records.
6. **Get guarantees in writing:** Any guarantees made by the contractor should be written into the contract. The guarantee should clearly state what is guaranteed, who is responsible for the guarantee and how long the guarantee is valid.
7. **Obtain a local building permit:** if required. Permits may be required for site work other than demolition and for reconstruction. Contact your local government for permit information.
8. **Make final payments only after the work is completed:** Do not sign completion papers or make the final payment until the work is completed to your satisfaction. A reputable contractor will not threaten you or pressure you to sign if the job is not finished properly.
9. **Pay by check:** Avoid on-the-spot cash payments. The safest route is to write a check to the contracting company. A reasonable down payment is 30%.

***This document is meant as a guide only, other requirements may be necessary. Please call if you have any questions regarding if a permit will be required or not.**