

# How To Choose The Right Contractor

Before you search for a contractor, you must do some homework about your specific job. Your goal isn't to become a technical expert, but you want to learn enough to ask the right questions and evaluate the answers.

## RESEARCH YOUR OPTIONS

Your neighbor had a great experience with one contractor and your co-worker had a terrible experience with another. This feedback is great research material! During the research phase, identify several contractors who can help you with your job. The best feedback comes from the word-of-mouth experiences of people you trust. They are more likely to give you the "straight scoop" on their experiences (both positive and negative) than other potential referrals. Your prospect list should include two to three contractors. Each prospect should be located locally and the business should have a physical street address. Then, you should call your local Better Business Bureau, or other consumer-related organizations to verify company information.

**Use this comparison sheet to help you in your research process**

	<u>Company A</u>	<u>Company B</u>
<u>Company Name</u>	_____	_____
How long has your company been in business?	_____	_____
How many certified service technicians does your company have?	_____	_____
How many certified heating and air conditioning installers does your company have?	_____	_____
Do your employees sign a Customer Service Pledge to do the right thing and do you have proof of it?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is your company a member of the BBB and in good standing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Has your company been voted best plumbing, heating, and air conditioning by readers of Delaware Today Magazine and the Wilmington News Journal?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
How many potential service technicians and installers aren't hired due to drug usage or a criminal background?	_____	_____
Is your company fully staffed with call takers and technicians on Saturday and Sunday to handle my service needs?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your company survey customers after the work is completed to find out the satisfaction level of the customer?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your company have adequate liability insurance and proof of it?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your company have workers compensation insurance and proof of it?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are all your employees randomly drug tested?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your company do a criminal background check on each employee before hiring them?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

*(continued on next page)*

	<u>Company A</u>		<u>Company B</u>	
Does your company test each employee before hiring them to verify their technical competence?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your company have a full-time technical trainer and weekly training for all technicians?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is your company willing to show me your training facility and explain to me your ongoing training program?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your company have a documented on-going training program to ensure the highest level of technical service?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Will your company use shoe covers and drop cloths to protect my home and property?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your company guarantee your service technicians will show up on time?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your company have a list of customers who have had problems that were resolved with a no-hassle, no questions asked written guarantee?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your company have a written 100% satisfaction guarantee or your money back?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Will your company pull permits on all work that requires one?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your company have state, county, and city licenses for the appropriate work?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Can your company provide me with a list of references for the work I am thinking about doing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

## HOW TO BE A SMART CUSTOMER

After you have completed the checklist above, here are a few more tips that will help you make an intelligent decision when it comes to investing money in your family's comfort and safety.

- \* Don't rush into a project or take the first bid that comes along (including door-to-door solicitations).
- \* Don't accept a verbal estimate; it must be in writing.
- \* Don't make cash payments or full payment up front.
- \* Don't make cash payments or full payment up front.
- \* Don't think you've discovered a great bargain if you get a bid that is substantially lower than other bids. Remember, you get what you pay for...and if it looks too good to be true, it probably is.