



## Before you hire a contractor...

### *do your homework!*

Finally, a definitive checklist to help you with your homework. My thanks to Dan Parsons at the Better Business Bureau, Mark Feinhandler at Preferred Builders and John Lane from the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation for contributing to this checklist. More copies are available at [www.homeworkhouston.com](http://www.homeworkhouston.com).

#### The Homework Houston Contractor Checklist

- Check the contractor's license. If it's required by the nature of the business or industry, checking the license is easy to do and takes little time. Check to see that the license is valid and if any complaints have been filed. [www.license.state.tx.us](http://www.license.state.tx.us)
- Review the rating with the Better Business Bureau. Look for unanswered or unresolved complaints. [www.bbbhou.org](http://www.bbbhou.org)
- Do a basic Google search. Search both the company name and the owner's name. Look for problems or unhappy customers.
- Ask for references. Check three (3) former clients and three (3) business references. Call and visit the job sites to verify them. Ask for a reference several years old and see how the project held up.
- Ask about industry affiliations. What trade organizations do they belong to? Verify their membership.
- Confirm insurance. Request that a certificate of insurance be sent to you directly from the agent or insurance carrier. Don't accept a printed copy from the contractor. Dan Parsons from the BBB says that is an area where they see a lot of fraud.
- Ask for a lien release. This protects you from liens should the contractor not pay their suppliers or subcontractors.
- How long has the contractor been in business under their current name? Look for 5 years or more of experience.



Marc McCoy, Host  
Homework Houston Radio

#### Helpful Tips:

1. Visit the contractors office. Mark Feinhandler at Preferred Builders says this is extremely important. Make sure the contractor has a physical address.
2. Be extra cautious when considering a door-to-door contractor who solicits you.
3. Don't fall for the "limited time" discounts. It's just a high-pressure closing tactic.
4. Compare written bids. Specify identical materials. Compare apples to apples.
5. Don't pay for the whole project until you are completely satisfied.



Homework Houston  
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KSEV AM 700, The Voice of Texas  
11451 Katy Freeway, Suite 215, Houston, TX, 77079  
281-588-4800