

EPISODE #3031 GRANDMA HOUSE BLUES

How to Choose a Contractor: Getting Started

Have an architectural plan done first, before you look for a contractor. This will specify exactly what work has to be done, and will ensure that all contractors are quoting on the exact same job. (see Fig. A)

- Architectural plans include drawings of the house with the new addition, which includes elevation plans for balance and proportions. Also the plans should include a list of materials that the contractor must use. (see Fig. B)
- Architectural plans usually take about a month to have done.
- You will need the plans to get a permit from the city.



A. Checking out the architectural plans.



B. Detailed plans are a must!



C. On the hunt for a contractor.



D. Door to door? Not your friend.

Choosing a Contractor

The best way to find a contractor is word of mouth. (see Fig. C)

- Check their references.
- Go look at other work that they have done.
- Ask questions their last few clients about their satisfaction with the work, cleanliness of the workers, price, etc.

Don't go with contractors who

- Solicit door to door (see Fig. D)
- Offer to use left over materials from a previous job
- Believe that no permit is required
- Needs an immediate decision
- Wants payment up front
- Suggests personal financial referrals

Do set-up interviews with your architectural plan in hand. (see Fig. E)

- It shouldn't be a stressful ordeal
- Interview several candidates
- Keep it professional

Do write an extensive contract that will be discussed, agreed upon and signed by the contractor and you. (see Fig. F) The contract should include:

- Description of the work that is to be done
- Itemized list of materials

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- Agreed upon start and end dates
- Warrantee information
- Clean-up schedule (daily, weekly, etc.)
- Change in work agreement (extra cost, plus materials)
- Safety issues (if someone will be home during the time the work is being done)
- Clause for structural surprises that come with old houses (extra cost)
- Payment schedules
- Any other issues that you and your contractor feel are important

During the building process, feel free to ask any question about the work, materials, timelines, etc. (see Fig. G, H, & I)

Before giving your final payment, check over the work to ensure it is done to your satisfaction.



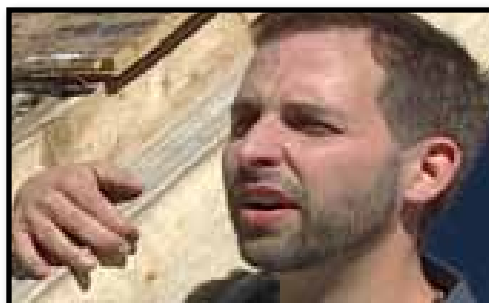
E. Conducting an interview.



F. Write, discuss, agree and sign.



G. Don't hesitate to ask questions.



H. And more questions...



I. Might as well cap it off with a few more.