

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER
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Hiring a Contractor

10 Things to Know and Do



Information for Homeowners

Hiring a Contractor

Whether you need a contractor for a major remodeling job, or simply for minor improvements or repairs, do the following:

1. Check the contractor's license –
Call the California Contractors State License Board (CSLB) at (800) 321-2752. They license contractors who do home improvements or repairs costing \$500 or more.

2. Only hire a licensed contractor –
Licensed contractors must post a \$10,000 bond with the state. You can file a claim against their bond if you have problems with the work they do.

3. Get three bids – It's important to shop around before hiring a contractor. Ask for references. Visit the homeowners they have done work for and review the quality of the work. Ask the homeowner if the contractor did the work on time and if they resolved problems quickly.

4. Avoid high-pressure sales tactics – Statements like, "this price is only good today" are rarely true. Don't sign a contract before you've had time to think it over or get other bids.

5. Get a written contract – Once you've hired a contractor, make sure the contract states:

- The job they will do.
- The full price it will cost.
- When they will complete the job.
- What building materials are included.

Read the contract carefully. Do not sign if you do not understand it. All promises should be written in the contract.

6. You have three days to cancel –
You can cancel within three business days of signing the contract. Send the contractor a written notice of cancellation by certified mail to the address listed on the contract. You cannot cancel by telephone.

7. Keep the down payment small –
Contractors can only collect a down payment of \$1,000 or 10% of the total cost, whichever is less.

8. Schedule your payments – Make sure you pay based on work they have completed. Do not let your payments get ahead of the work actually completed.

If the work does not satisfy you, file a complaint with the California Contractors State License Board (CSLB) at (800) 321-2752. If you don't pay your contractor, they can file a mechanic's lien on your property.

9. Never pay cash – You won't have proof of payment. Pay with checks, money orders, or credit cards. Keep records of all payments you've made.

10. Know when to make your final payment – Make sure the work satisfies you before signing a Completion Certificate. Don't make the final payment until they have finished the entire job.

Did you know?

Low interest government loans are available to low and moderate-income homeowners for home improvements and repairs. For more information, call the Community Development Commission at (323) 890-7001.

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