



ProtectMyHome.net

Hiring a Plumbing Contractor? Hire Smart!

Five steps

1. Create a detailed plan.
2. Find potential contractors.
3. Check them out online and verify their contractor license.
See Page 2
4. Compare written bids.
See Page 3
5. Finalize your written agreement — and be careful how and when you pay.

Be wary of contractors who:

- Give you an offer that sounds “too good to be true.”
- Will only accept cash, want a large deposit, or want payments made out to their own name, instead of a business.

Step 1: Create a detailed plan for your plumbing project.

Are you remodeling your bathroom, or hiring someone to replace a laundry room sink, repair a toilet or add on the kitchen of your dreams? The better you can communicate to your contractor what you need, the less chance there will be for miscommunication or cost overruns.

► What would you *like* to do, versus what do you *need* to do?

► What’s your budget? _____

► Start jotting down your ideas or make a sketch of your project below.

*Many homeowners collect magazine clippings, photos, material samples and model numbers to show their contractors **upfront**. Visit home shows and showrooms, and collect specific examples of your own. It will help prevent misunderstandings and help you clearly communicate what you want to accomplish.*

Step 2: Find potential contractors.

Get recommendations from trusted friends, work colleagues, insurance brokers, real estate agents and local homebuilder associations. Interview several licensed plumbing contractors and get at least three written bids.

If you hire a general contractor for a remodeling project that includes work besides plumbing, make sure the contractor subcontracts the plumbing part of the job to a licensed plumbing contractor.

When certified plumbers are on a job, their certification badge must be visible to show customers they are properly certified.



Washington State Department of
Labor & Industries

Start your worksheet 



Hire Smart Worksheet

Step 3: Check out potential plumbing contractors online.

Go to www.Lni.wa.gov/Verify to verify contractor license, and to ensure they are bonded, have liability insurance and no outstanding infractions. Then check out their online reputation.

Potential plumbing contractor's business name, owner's name, and location.	Plumbing contractor licensed with L&I? Find out: www.Lni.wa.gov/Verify	Get a written bid.	Did you collect three references you can verify? Call their customers. Go see the work.
1.	Licensed with L&I? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: # _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No Online reputation OK? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Business address verified? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Amount: \$ _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ Would they hire them again? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2.	Licensed with L&I? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: # _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No Online reputation OK? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Business address verified? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Amount: \$ _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ Would they hire them again? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3.	Licensed with L&I? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: # _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No Online reputation OK? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Business address verified? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Amount: \$ _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ Would they hire them again? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4.	Licensed with L&I? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: # _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No Online reputation OK? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Business address verified? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Amount: \$ _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ Would they hire them again? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No



Hire Smart Worksheet

Step 4: Compare bids submitted by the *screened* contractors only.

Compare the written bids carefully. But don't just look for the lowest price!

Screened contractors	Bid and deposit the contractor requests	Do start and end dates meet your schedule?	Are the materials/products <i>you</i> want specified in the bid?	Did they offer you a written warranty?
_____ Name _____ Years in business	Bid: \$ _____ Deposit: \$ _____ / _____%	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Completion deadline: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes: _____ years <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____ Name _____ Years in business	Bid: \$ _____ Deposit: \$ _____ / _____%	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Completion deadline: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes: _____ years <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____ Name _____ Years in business	Bid: \$ _____ Deposit: \$ _____ / _____%	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Completion deadline: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes: _____ years <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____ Name _____ Years in business	Bid: \$ _____ Deposit: \$ _____ / _____%	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Completion deadline: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes: _____ years <input type="checkbox"/> No
_____ Name _____ Years in business	Bid: \$ _____ Deposit: \$ _____ / _____%	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Completion deadline: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes: _____ years <input type="checkbox"/> No



Hire Smart Worksheet

Step 5: Finalize your written agreement with the chosen contractor: _____

Name

- Review the contract, ask questions and sign only when you're comfortable with it.** (Signed copy of written bid OK for small projects). Does the contract include required permits? Sales tax? Payment terms, retainage clause and final payment requirements? Specific description of work and materials? Warranties? Start and end dates?
- Read, sign and get a copy of the *Notice to Customer*.** The Notice informs you of your rights, including your "right to retainage" — a percentage of the contract price *you can withhold* until you are satisfied. Your contractor is required to provide this before work starts. Sample notice: www.Lni.wa.gov/ModelDisclosureStatement
- Don't make a large deposit or pay in cash,** particularly if you are having emergency repair work done.
- Ask the contractor to provide the certification number of the plumber who will complete the work.** Tell your contractors you expect only journey level plumbers or properly supervised trainees on your project and will expect them to be wearing their certification badge showing they are properly certified.
- If you agree to have emergency repair work done,** and then the contractor insists additional major changes or repairs are needed, it may be wise to stop work and call for a second opinion and/or get a bid from another qualified contractor before proceeding.

Step 6: Before you make final payment

- Check with permitting departments to make sure your contractor has obtained all required building, electrical, health or environmental permits, as agreed.** Then check that all inspections took place and that you have completed copies to document them.
- Obtain any lien waiver/releases your contractor agreed earlier to provide.** These should be signed off by subcontractors and/or suppliers to verify they have been paid for work on your property. (A sample lien waiver can be found on the L&I website at www.Lni.wa.gov/go/F625-029-000.)
- Make sure you are satisfied:** Do a final walk-through with the contractor to identify any remaining items that must be completed. (This is commonly referred to as a punch list.)

Learn more about avoiding pitfalls — and how to hire the right contractor:

www.ProtectMyHome.net ■ 1-800-647-0982

Report an unregistered construction contractor or unlicensed plumbing contractor:

www.Lni.wa.gov/ReportAContractor ■ 1-888-811-5974, option 1

Upon request, foreign language support and formats for persons with disabilities are available. Call 1-800-547-8367. TDD users, call 711.

L&I is an equal opportunity employer.

PUBLICATION F627-044-000 [07-2021]