

How To Choose an Electrician

By Matt Dell

When going through the process of choosing an electrician, there are a number of factors to consider. The size of the job and the cost involved are important parts of the equation, of course, but there are other considerations to take into account that are also important. Among those considerations are the reputation of the electrician, whether the electrician is part of a recognized union or is properly licensed, and whether the electrician will stand behind his or her work. How do you find these things out? You ask questions.

Does the electrician have a list of references? That's a good place to start and a question that should be near the top of the list. When evaluating whether a particular electrician is the right one to hire for your project, it doesn't hurt to call others who have employed him in the past or the company he represents. Ask others about the electrician's professionalism, quality of work, courtesy, timeliness, etc. Were they satisfied with the way everything turned out? If they had any problems after the project was completed, were they able to get them rectified?

You may also want to get professional and trade references from the electrician as well. Or you may want to contact a consumer advocacy group in your area to see if there have been any complaints registered in the past.

Is the electrician a member of a reputable union? If the electrician is, he will have a union card. You can be confident that the electrician has had to adhere to high standards of training and satisfactorily exhibit the knowledge and skills that the union requires of its members. In some states, electricians may not have access to union membership. In such a case, be certain that the electrician has followed all of the mandates required by that state and is properly licensed. A master of journeyman electrician's license type and number is normally required to be shown with any sign or advertisement. One can usually call the state board of examiners to verify licensure of a particular electrician. Other information will also be available from the state, such as the number of years licensed and the licensee's complaint history. This information will give you a pretty good idea if the electrician is worth considering for the job or not.

An electrician who is willing to stand behind his work will give the customer a guarantee in writing. If the electrician is not willing to provide guarantees, you may want to look elsewhere. Always agree in writing to the scope of project and the work to be completed. The electrician who is willing to stand behind his work will assure the customer that there is adequate liability insurance

to cover any losses that occur in the event that something goes wrong during the project. You may want to ask to see a copy of the electrician's insurance policy.

Other questions you may want to ask include:

1. How long has the electrician been in business? Obviously, those who have been in business for a longer time have a more established reputation and have done enough to keep customers satisfied through the years to keep the doors open.
2. Is the electrician properly licensed?
3. Will the electrician comply with all national, state and local regulations and codes?
4. Is the electrician financially responsible?
5. Is the electrician willing to break down his total bid to reflect the costs of each aspect of the project?

Even if you feel comfortable with the first electrician you contact, take the time to interview others. You can always go back to the first one when the interviewing is done, but you may find another who you feel even better about hiring.

After you have had the project evaluated by professionals and have some bids in hand, there may be a temptation to go with the lowest price. If the electrician with the lowest bid has met all of the other requirements to your satisfaction, he may indeed be the one you want to hire. Don't let the low bid be the top factor in the final decision, however. You may find that it is worth it to pay a little extra for the project to get the electrician whom you feel the best about. After all, you're entrusting a lot to his care. Your peace of mind regarding the person you hire is a lot more valuable in the long run than the difference in cost between the bids of one electrician and another.