

# How To Select a Plumbing Contractor

By Curt Hagedorn

Next to your lawyer and your accountant, probably the next best professional a homeowner can have a close relationship is a plumber: and that order is debatable. Water of any kind is a major destroyer of property and a home with faulty plumbing is an expensive accident or failure waiting to happen. Whether you're building a home, renovating one or just in need of some repairs, selecting a plumber is one of the more important decisions you can make for the life of your home and the health of your pocketbook.

Selecting any professional is a matter of research, recommendation and references. If you're in the process of building or renovating a home, the first person to ask is your general contractor and/or architect. They may have professionals that they're used to or comfortable working with. However, just because your contractor or architect recommends someone (unless it's in your contract with them that they approve all the subcontractors) doesn't mean you must approve them. You should still go through the same process you would with any contractor of gathering and checking out references, checking with your local BBB, professional and trade associations and in general reassuring yourself that they're professional, reliable, efficient and honest.

Particularly if you are acting as your own general contractor and employing each subcontractor yourself, you should make sure that you get lien waivers from subcontractors as protection against other legal claims on your subs business. Also make sure that if you have any specific or unusual plumbing requirements that the references you get include examples of say, installing a whirlpool tub or elaborate shower system, or solving specific plumbing challenges peculiar to your home. Since plumbing in some cases can include radiators, boilers, and even interfacing with heating, cooling and ventilation: for example, overseeing and installing piping for radiant floor heating, make sure that your plumbing contractor is experienced in that type of work as well.

If you're merely looking to do some upgrading, for example renovating a bathroom, the same rules apply, but perhaps where doing your research is most important is hiring a plumber for repairs or even emergency situations. If you do you have a plumbing emergency, if you can, turn off the water immediately, as the longer it keeps running the more damage it can do: knowing how to turn off ALL the water, electricity and other utilities in your house in case of danger is your responsibility as a homeowner or even as a home renter. Not only can it save many thousands of dollars in damage, it can save your life as well as your home and personal property.

Once you have at least stopped the problem don't let inconvenience push you into picking the first person out of the yellow pages. Ask for an estimate and if possible, even if it means showering at a friend's house for a day or two, get some references and a few different opinions. This could save you hundreds or even thousands of dollars. I will never forget calling a plumber to fix a clogged basement toilet over the Christmas holidays. He was talking about the time and expense of getting up on the roof and going down through the vent when I mentioned a relative who was a plumbing contractor arriving the next day and suddenly, the toilet was unclogged for far less than hundreds of dollars he had been discussing only a moment before. While you want to assume that most contractors are honest, if you don't do your homework, let the buyer beware.

Once you do find a reliable and honest plumber they're worth their weight in gold. Remember, not even your doctor will rush over to your house at 2:00 AM so you and your family can take a hot shower in the morning, or to head off thousands of dollars in water damage. So pay promptly, include them on the Christmas cookie list, learn their birthday and in general try as hard as you can to make them feel like a member of the family. A good plumber does work that no one else can or in some cases wants to do. They deserve all the praise they can get.

Copyright © 2006 Publishers-Edge

The logo for Publishers-Edge features a large, light red downward-pointing triangle on the left side. To the right of the triangle, the word "Publishers-Edge" is written in a large, bold, italicized, light gray sans-serif font.