



ProtectMyHome.net

Hiring a Plumber? Hire Smart!

Five steps

1. Create a detailed plan.
2. Find potential contractors.
3. Check them out online and verify registration.
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 accept only cash, want a very 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, hiring someone to repair a water heater or toilet or adding 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 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 concrete examples of your own. It will help prevent misunderstandings and help you clearly communicate what you want to accomplish.*

Step 2: Find potential plumbing contractors.

Get recommendations from trusted friends, work colleagues, insurance brokers, real estate agents and local homebuilder associations. Interview several contractors. You will want to end up with at least three *written* bids from *registered* contractors.

If you hire a general contractor to perform work that includes plumbing, make sure the contractor either hires a licensed plumber or subcontracts the work to a specialty plumbing contractor. To make sure a *licensed* plumber is doing your project, ask to see the license that all legitimate plumbers are required to have in their possession while doing plumbing work.



Hire Smart Worksheet

Step 3: Check out potential plumbing contractors online.

Go to www.Verify.Lni.wa.gov to verify registration and tradesperson certification 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 certified plumber's name	Contractor registered with L&I? Plumber licensed with L&I? Find out: www.Verify.Lni.wa.gov	Get a <i>written</i> bid.	Did you collect three references you can verify? Call their customers. Go see the work.
1.	Registered 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.	Registered 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.	Registered 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.	Registered 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!

Steps 5 & 6 

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 _____ Plumber certification #	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 _____ Plumber certification #	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 _____ Plumber certification #	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 _____ Plumber certification #	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/Forms/pdf/625030af.pdf
- 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 on your project and will expect the plumbers to present their certification when they arrive to perform the work.
- 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/release 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.)
- 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

File a complaint against an unregistered construction contractor or unlicensed plumber:

www.Lni.wa.gov/TradesLicensing/Contractors/ContractorFraud ■ 1-888-811-5974, option 1