



Are you suffering from anxiety about working with a contractor?
Are you afraid of giant overages?
Will the finished home actually be YOURS, or will the contractor have
robbed you of your dream by going over budget and making decisions
without you.

Here are 10 tips on how to make your experience the best it can be.

- 1. Make sure you are working with an honest contractor.**
"You cannot make a good deal with a bad person." (Zig Ziglar). No matter how good the sales pitch sounds, make sure your contractor is honest. It may sound like a scare tactic, but it is a simple hard fact that contractors can take advantage of a large, detailed purchase such as a home, not to mention simply taking your money and running.
- 2. Make sure your contractor is a good communicator.**
Many HONEST contractors have surprised their clients with extra costs at the end of the project simply because they didn't communicate what a change would cost. You don't want to be told "You're doing fine." and then have extra cost at the end. Get specifics. Along with communicating well with you, a contractor needs to be a good listener. In the end, you want the house to be YOUR home. Make sure your contractor is a good listener.
- 3. Make sure your contractor is organized.**
An organized contractor is more likely to have accurate cost information when you ask for it, and is prepared to help you make decisions on time. The best contractors have master lists of all the decisions that need to be made so you can simply work down the checklist.
- 4. Make sure your contractor is experienced.**
Does your contractor know HOW to build. How long has their company been in business. Are their subcontractors experienced? Experienced contractors can deliver a better product, and if they are honest and organized, they can deliver it on time and on budget.
- 5. Understand that your contractor has to make a fair living.**
Construction work of any sort is tough work. No contractor can afford to lose money, even honest, clear communicating, organized contractors. It is not in your best interest for them to feel they are donating parts of the home to your worthy cause. Contractors who are able to make a fair living will be more likely to put that "something extra" into your project, less likely to cut

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corners, and more likely to take care of you when service is needed after the sale.

6. Be organized yourself.

Have decisions made well in advance of each stage of the construction process. A decision about grout color seems like a small thing, but consider this. Special colors have to be ordered in advance. If the subcontractor is scheduled to start monday, and finds out too late that the grout color is going to be different, he may have to wait several days for it to be delivered. Since he was ready to start, he may have his crew already loaded for or on the job. He also may not have his next job prepared. Your lack of preparedness may have cost him the opportunity to make a fair living on this day, or it may have caused your price to increase because of the money he spent doing nothing. Even if you have a set price on his work, it is in your best interest to work with contractors in a way that they can make a fair living. If they begin to feel pinched cost-wise, they will be tempted to cut corners, and will certainly become less willing to put that "something extra" into your project. Being organized=helping your contractor complete your project on time and make a fair living=a better built product that everyone is proud of in the end.

7. Choose Honest Allowances.

There is something intrinsically flawed about developing a plan for a well-built, stylish home with all your personalized creature comforts, and then putting the plan out to bid with multiple contractors. Each contractor wants the project, and so they will bid in \$3 per square foot for floor covering, \$50 per light fixture, etc. In the end, you will be forced to sacrifice what you really want, or go over every allowance in order to get the quality features that make the house become YOUR HOME. If you have a set budget, and most of us do, you have to choose between "MORE HOUSE, LESSER FINISH and LESS HOUSE, BETTER FINISH. A classic example of this is the allowance for seeding the lawn. Most contractors will price the allowance at 7 cents per square foot, (\$1,000 for an average 14,000 square foot lawn). They don't want to lose the project because of a seeding allowance that is 50% higher than their competitor's. However, this price can only purchase a lawn that is high in fast-germinating perennial ryegrass, which will forever struggle with funguses and other problems. And it will never get the deep blue-green look that a 10 cents per square foot Kentucky Bluegrass Lawn will achieve.

8. Protect Your Investment!

If you own a wooded lot, you need to be aware that many people will pay extra for the wooded lot and then pay for the removal of dead trees for the next five years after construction. This is because proper protections are not in place during the construction process. Trees are extremely sensitive to

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compaction of the soil, as well as to changing of the soil level in their root zone. In most cases, simply calling in an expert to rope off the root zones to construction traffic and fill can protect the look you loved enough to purchase. For a free copy of our information sheet "5 tips to preserve your wooded lot" call 627-8342.

9. Inspect the Project Yourself.

Be proactive. Build time into your schedule to stop by the project on a regular basis (daily or every other day) during times when the construction is active, even if it means giving up evening activities during the time of your construction. You will be the first to notice if a wall is in the wrong place, if a window got missed, or if they didn't wire properly for your double oven. In addition to catching mistakes, you can make sure that the project is staying on schedule. The squeaky wheel gets the oil. This is true. And you can be a squeaky wheel without being a jerk by simply asking "Where is the drywall crew today. You had said they would be here today. When should I really expect them." Even Honest, Communicative, Organized, and Experienced contractors will miss details and fall behind schedule. When mistakes are caught early, and the project stays on schedule, it is cheaper for everyone involved and the result is more satisfying.

10. Save something for those finishing touches, such as furniture, draperies, and landscaping!

10' shade trees or 6' evergreens cost \$350.00 apiece. Seeding with good quality seed costs 10 cents per square foot. Landscape beds cost anywhere from \$2 per square foot to \$10 per square foot, and you get what you pay for. Do the math! How many square feet of landscape bed and lawn are you likely to install? Leave yourself at least enough budget to trench out the downspout lines, seed the lawn, and dress the front of the house nicely for curb appeal.

Want more of this helpful information? Call 627-8342 for our list of "Ten things you should know before hiring a landscape contractor."

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