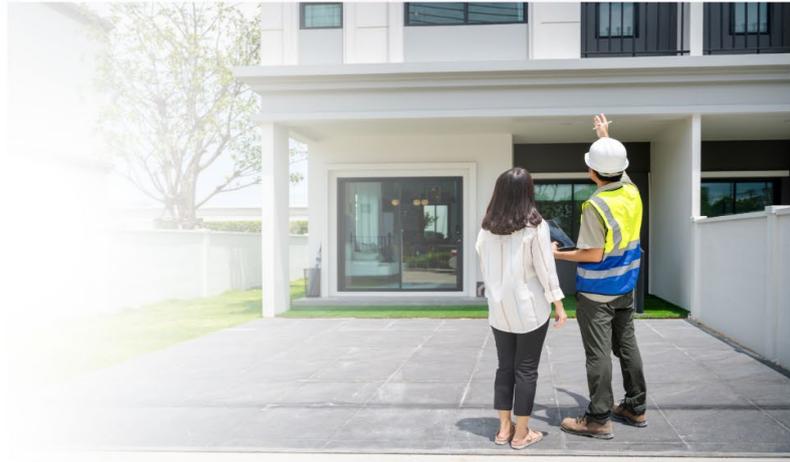


# Legal Tips When Hiring Contractors

From



Springtime is “fix it” time. For those projects that are too big or complex for the “average homeowner,” a building contractor, plumber, carpenter, or other tradesman is essential.

Most contract disputes with building contractors and tradesmen arise from a lack of communication and misunderstandings about the work to be performed.

**Here are 9 things you can do to help minimize problems:**

1. ALWAYS check references. Request the names and phone numbers of the owners of the last three projects completed by the contractor, then contact the owners and ask them about their experience with the contractor.
2. If possible, visit at least one of the projects and closely inspect the detail work. Sloppy detail work is a major warning sign.
3. Check with your local Better Business Bureau and ask for a complaint history on the contractor or go to [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org).
4. Ask to see the contractor’s license authorizing him/her to perform the work you want to be completed, a copy of their insurance policy, and bond.
5. ALWAYS get a detailed written estimate of the cost and scope of the work before agreeing to it.
6. ALWAYS incorporate the estimate into a concise, clearly worded agreement describing the work to be performed and the price that is signed by you and the contractor.

7. This document should also include a time frame for completing the work and a “hold back” provision permitting you to withhold a portion of the final payment until work is completed and all governmental inspections are completed and passed.
8. If your agreement is on a “cost-plus” basis, demand copies of all invoices and ensure they are marked “paid” before reimbursing the contractor for them.
9. ALWAYS describe any changes to the work in writing and include a description of the changes in the work and changes in the cost of the project. The document should be signed by both you and the contractor.
10. Inspect the work as it is being performed and compare it to the description in your agreement. The earlier you detect any problems in performance, the earlier you can correct them.



Your LegalShield provider law firm can assist with these issues. Call your firm before signing a contract, whenever a problem arises, or if you have any questions.

**If you don’t have LegalShield, please consider enrolling at your next opportunity.**

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