

Seven Things You Must Know Before Hiring a House Painter

Introduction

Every decade or so, most homes need a new paint of coat. Painting your home helps protect it from the elements, keeps it looking good, and allows you to just enjoy it more.

The thing is- painting a home by yourself can take a LONG time. Plus if you don't live in a ranch, you'll need tall ladders to reach the second or third stories.

This leads many people towards hiring a professional, which brings its own challenges. They'll need to do research into house painters, find one that's actually affordable, set up a few interviews, etc.

Sounds like a hassle, right?

Well it doesn't have to be. This report will help you decide the best company for the job- period. You'll be able to sleep better at night in your nice, freshly-painted home.

Oh yeah- and you wouldn't have paid with your first-born child.

To start this off, let's look at the most common question that people ask- is a pro really necessary?

Should You Do it Yourself or Hire a Pro?

Most people consider painting to be a fairly easy task. You dip a roller or brush into the paint, and then apply it evenly to walls.

Simple, right?

Well for the most part- yeah that's all there is to it. Most people can paint their own home if they really want to. It's a good way for them to save a few bucks, get outside, and take pride in their own work.

But there's a different side of the coin to consider, because hiring a professional has a few advantages. Here are a few of the big ones to consider:

Time Savings

Even though you might save a few bucks by doing it yourself, don't forget about all of those hours you'll be spending on this project. If you're all by yourself, it can take you a few weeks to paint the whole house!

That's working a few hours every day. Obviously it depends on how big your house is, but you'd be surprised how long it can take to properly paint a home in your spare time.

You're busy enough as it is- do you really want to spend your small amount of spare time painting?

Safety

Painters are constantly standing on tall ladders. They have to climb on roofs, lean out windows, and do some other crazy stuff to get the job done.

Even though 90% of painting is relatively safe, it's that last 10% that keeps mothers up at night. Why would you do this yourself when you can easily hire someone to do this stuff for you?

Professional painters know what they're doing- they do this every day. They know how to properly use a ladder and how to measure their level of fatigue. They won't push their own limits because they realize what's at stake.

Do you?

Quality

It's not rocket science to brush paint onto a wall...

But can just anyone make paint look good?

Even more importantly- do *you* know how to always make the paint look good, how to get those hard-to-reach places, and the most critical parts of your home to paint?

Probably not.

Professionals know that certain areas of the home- such as the small gaps under side paneling- are extremely important. If you don't paint those critical areas, your home is more susceptible to mold, critters or other types of damage.

So a pro will not only help the paint look better- they'll also protect your home better.

Speed

A professional will probably have at least 3-4 people working on your house at any given time. Sometimes it may be just 1-2 for the finishing touches, but generally expect a full crew.

Don't you think they will be able to finish the job faster than you doing it all by yourself? Of course they can. So instead of the job taking a full month, you'll be sitting pretty in your freshly-painted home within just 1-2 weeks.

This gives you peace of mind. You'll know that this project is complete, so you can focus on other tasks- either around the house or at work.

To Wrap it Up...

You can definitely save a few bucks doing everything yourself. But a professional will do everything better and faster, saving you precious time to focus on other things.

But before you go out and hire the first professional house painter you find, let's look at a few things you need to do.

What You Need to do to Prepare for Professional Painting

Even though some professionals might do these things for you, remember that you're primarily paying them to paint- not move stuff around!

That's why we recommend doing these things yourself- you get more "bang for the buck".

Move Furniture

Your painters will probably cover up the furniture with plastic sheets, but you still need to make sure it's not in their way. They don't want to be stumbling around on your furniture- especially if they have a full paint bucket in their hand!

If you can, move the furniture out of the room being painted. If you don't have the available space, move it all to the center of the room.

Oh yeah, and "Move Furniture" also includes wall hangings! Paintings, pictures, quotes, clocks, mirrors, and anything else that you have hanging on the wall. It isn't exactly easy to paint a wall that's covered in pictures and clocks, is it?

Remove Outlet Covers and Switch Plates

A lot of people forget about this little step. Even though it's not *really* a big deal if most switch plates or outlet covers get paint on them it's easier to just avoid it by removing them. Because these things are usually plastic, removing dried paint isn't always easy.

This step is especially important if you have pretty nice covers and switch plates. Most people have the cheap \$1 ones from Home Depot, but you definitely don't want to get paint all over your nicer, vintage ones.

Allocate at Least One Space as a "Staging Area"

Professional painters don't just carry their gallon bucket with them everywhere. They set up shop in one or 2 areas that allows them plenty of space to store their ladders, plastic sheets, paint, etc.

Even though painters will bring in all of their own stuff, you may want to make room for them to keep all of this stuff. This is especially important if you have a lot of belongings in your home, as this can lead to a lot of clutter (no offense, but you know who you are!)

Clean the Walls

You might think “these walls are about to get painted- why should I clean them?” It actually makes *more* sense to clean them because they’re about to get painted.

Paint tends to bring out any physical differences in a wall. Things like dust or dirt are especially more visible after painting, as the paint basically sticks these substances to the wall permanently.

To clean the walls, you don’t need anything fancy. Just make a mixed solution of water and a mild detergent, and then apply it to the wall with a sponge. Don’t soak the walls- you’re just trying to get most of the surface stains and dust off.

Make sure that you leave plenty of time for the walls to dry before paint day! Consider using fans to help speed up the process if you’re running short on time.

Shore Up Those Pets

Every professional painter has had this happen at least once... probably dozens of times.

The family doesn’t want to board up Fido, so the dog or cat can come or go as they please. The problem with this- especially when painting doors or the corners of walls- is that sometimes the animal rubs up against the fresh coat of paint.

We understand that your pet doesn’t like being in the crate or laundry room- but they should be okay for a few hours. If you really don’t want to do that, either board them up, have a loved one take them for a few days, or take the risk of having a painted animal to clean!

All Done?

Now that you know what you’ll need to do to prepare, let’s find you a painter.

Where to Start Looking for a Reputable House Painter

There are generally 3 main places to look for a good professional painter. Let's start with the most time-tested and proven method... friends and family.

Word-of-Mouth Referrals

Word-of-mouth has always been the most powerful form of marketing out there. If someone you know and trust recommends a service or product to you, you're more likely to buy it.

That's all there is to it.

So when you start looking for a good painter, ask your local friends and family if they've had their house painted recently. If they liked the painter and the quality, find out who it was.

Keep in mind that you'll probably have to talk to a lot of people just to get a few referrals. Most people don't have their home painted very common, so you should plan on asking neighbors, family, co-workers, friends at church, etc. The more people you ask, the better your chances of finding a good painter.

Google/Bing/Yahoo!/The Phone Book/Other Search Engines

Search engines are the greatest research tools ever invented. They allow you to quickly find just about any information you want, from local contractors to cooking recipes.

Simply type in "your town" painter into the search box and see what comes up. You'll probably get a lot of results, along with a lot of advertisements on the top and sides.

This method works well if you want to interview a lot of painters before making a decision. The downside is that you don't know much about these companies. Another downside is that you might feel overwhelmed when you see the long list of companies to choose from!

The third option is kind of a mix between the first two...

Review Websites

Websites such as Angie's List have exploded over the last few years. They're a great way to see what other people think about contractors, doctors, and just about any other local service.

The best thing about them is that you can easily find the best-rated painter in your area. The downside is that you have to pay a membership fee to join, so it's not quite as cost-effective as asking for recommendations or using a search engine.

Now that you know *where* to look, let's start talking about what to look for in a good professional painter.

Things You Should Expect from a House Painter

When you hire a professional painter, there are a few standard things to expect. Here's a list of some of the basics:

Timely

A professional should arrive on time, not take extended lunch breaks, and close up shop before it gets too late at night. This lets them complete the job quickly and reduce inconvenience to you, their client.

Walkthrough

Do you think a professional would just “take a guess” at how much your project will cost, how much paint is required, and how long it will take?

No way.

Instead, they'll do a complete walkthrough to see what is being painted. They'll take measurements, ask a lot of questions, and will likely take pictures or notes.

Colors, Finishes, and End Goal

A professional house painter wants to make sure that you're happy. They'll ask about what colors you'd like, any specific finishes, etc. If you haven't selected a specific brand yet, they can also give a good recommendation regarding their favorite paint brands.

This is nice because most consumers have no idea what's considered a quality paint. Even if you see ads on the TV or hear them on the radio, that doesn't mean it's a quality brand!

Insurance & Licenses

A professional painter should have insurance and proper licenses. This will help you feel secure about hiring this company, as it adds a layer of protection for both yourself and them in case of an accident.

The painter should provide this information to you for your records.

Thorough Estimates

If you see a number just scribbled onto a napkin- run!

A professional painter will have a complete breakdown of their costs and schedule. That way if you decide you only want a fraction of the house done at this time, you can do that. It also gives you a peace of mind because it lets you know that they didn't just make everything up.

Questions?

Painters know that their service is not a cheap investment. They realize that some people have a lot of questions or hesitations about hiring a painter. Finally, they realize that they'd be working on your largest asset- your home- and that you'd be worried about damage or something going wrong.

That's why they should be more than happy to answer any questions you have. From insurance to expertise or paint color, they should be more than willing to help you out.

Cleaning

Let's face it- painting is messy. But a professional knows how to keep the home as clean as possible during this time. And in case they do make a mess, they should quickly clean it up at their own time and expense.

This goes for cleaning up at the end of the day as well. Unless you specifically gave them permission to leave a mess, they should do everything they can to get stuff out of your way in case they didn't finish the job.

Touch-Ups

Are you happy with the paint job? Or are there a lot of spots that don't match the rest of the wall? Or maybe the trim got a ton of paint sloshed onto it.

Whatever the case- you're paying the painter to make you happy. Period. This does *not* mean that you can ask them to perform extra, unpaid work just because you changed your mind halfway through a project.

But it *does* mean that if they mess up, they should fix it. Sometimes that's a simple touch-up, sometimes its repainting an entire wall.

Besides just knowing what to expect from a home painter, let's look at the different types of painters that are out there.

Are There Different Types of Painters?

To make this simple- there aren't many different types of house painters. Even though there are definitely different types of paint and finishes- it's not quite as cut-and-dry when it comes to painting companies.

That said, there are a few different types of painters you can use for your home:

Mom-and-Pop's Painting Company

Some painters are very small businesses that involve 1-5 people. They generally get most of their business from their church, friends' referrals, family, etc.

Depending on how long they've been in business, they may or may not have all of the tools and equipment they need to paint an entire house. Large ladders and insurance aren't cheap! And even if they do have all of the tools necessary, they may not have the highest quality tools to use.

Generally these will be your least expensive option. The job might take a bit longer and the quality may not be as good, but at least you're saving a few bucks and might feel better for helping out a small business.

Small Commercial Companies

Some companies are a bit larger than the Mom-and-Pop companies, but still aren't very big. They tend to do both commercial and residential jobs and have a lot of experience.

These companies take things a bit more seriously than the one-man-shows. They have valid insurance, customer testimonials/references, and pictures of some of the homes they've painted over the years.

Generally these are a safe bet as they won't be extremely expensive, but you're still getting a professional company.

Specialty/Decoration Painting

Some painters specialize in different styles or finishes. For example if you want one wall of your house to be faux painted, you probably wouldn't hire any run-of-the-mill painter.

Another option is to hire someone to paint a mural on a wall in your home. This is fairly popular for families with small kids, or if they simply love the arts and want a mural in their living room.

That's really about it. There are other types of companies out there, but they're generally commercial companies that only serve businesses and office buildings.

Now let's talk about one of the most important parts of hiring a house painter- the estimate.

Understanding the Estimate and Pricing

Painters have two main types of costs- direct and indirect. Knowing the difference is the first step in understanding a price estimate.

Indirect Costs

These are the costs that aren't directly tied to your painting project. For example, indirect costs include the monthly payment on the equipment, work truck, overhead and benefits for the crew.

Indirect costs also include things like the utilities and rent of the contractor's headquarters (if they have one). Part of the salary for support staff, such as a secretary, is also included.

Customers often forget about these types of costs until they first receive the estimate. When it turns out higher than they may have expected, it's usually because of the indirect costs.

Direct Costs

Direct costs are generally just paint, labor and gas (especially if you live out of town from the painter's main region). These are the costs that people usually think of when coming up with their own budget.

These costs can vary widely depending on where you live and what kind of paint you want. For example, areas with a higher cost of living can expect to pay more in labor costs.

Besides just breaking up costs by direct/indirect, let's take a look at what you should expect to see on the estimate.

What to Expect on the Estimate

- Labor (\$X at Y man hours)
- Timeframe (Z days)
- Paint (Price per gallon)
- Amount of paint (based on square footage of the project)
- Setup/cleanup
- Indirect costs (such as overhead)
- Travel costs

Some of these things may be lumped together. See if the painter can break the numbers out, just because it gives you a better idea of where your money is going.

Make it Crystal-Clear

Make sure that the final estimate is crystal-clear. You want it to say exactly what you're paying for and how long it's expected to take.

Don't let the project get halfway done and then realize that something is missing on the estimate, or that it's unclear. It's ALWAYS easier to fix the estimate upfront than to make changes to your agreement later.

Other Important Questions to Ask a House Painter

There are a lot of really good questions you should ask your house painter. These will not only help you get to know their personality, but also their expertise.

Even though this isn't a complete list, it will definitely help get you started:

How Long Have You Been Painting Houses?

How Experienced is Most of Your Crew?

How Long will the Project Take to Complete?

What do You Need Me to Do Before You Could Start?

Do You Recommend Multiple Coats?

What Kind of Prep Work is Included in Your Quotes?

Do You Caulk and Fill Cracks?

Do You Pick Up All of Your Trash at the End?

Do You Pressure Wash the Outdoor Walls?

Are There any Homes Nearby You've Recently Finished that I Could See?

Can I Trust Your Painters to Come Inside?

Do You Have a Warranty or Guarantee?

Do You Spray, Roll or Brush on Outside Walls? What about the Inside?

Which Paints do You Recommend for this Job?

Do I Need Any Major Repairs Before You Can Start?

Do You Apply Primer Before the Paint?

What Happens if Paint Gets in the Carpet or on the Concrete or Roof Tiles?

Again, this is just to help get you started. If you think of other questions you'd like to know before moving forward, ask away!

Conclusion

Hiring a professional painter will save you a lot of time and money in the long run. The key is to make sure that you do your due diligence while researching different house painters. There will always be a balance of cost, schedule and quality, so consider which is the most important to you.

If you have any other questions or concerns about hiring a house painter, please let us know- we'd be happy to help.

Sincerely

Your Name