

# Seven Things You Must Know Before Hiring a Roofing Company

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# Introduction

Your roof is the first part of the house that protects you and your family from the elements. It has to stand up to everything from the hot, blazing sun in the summer to hail and snow in the winter.

That's why it's so important that you have your roof done by professionals who use quality materials. This makes the difference between a roof that lasts 5 years and 20 (or more).

The problem is that it can feel like a lot of pressure to select the right roofer, right? There are a lot of things to consider, from referrals to budget and timeframe.

Luckily for you, you found this short report. In the next few chapters you'll learn the basics in what to look for. You'll learn questions to ask, how to understand pricing and estimates, and a lot more.

Let's start by talking about what you should consider before hiring your next roofer.

# What Do I Need to Consider in Hiring a Roofer?

As mentioned earlier, there are quite a few things to consider. These are the main ones to think about when you start your search.

## Experience

How long has the roofer been in business? Two years? Twelve? Thirty?

A roofing company that has been around for a while is generally the better choice. For one thing, they'll know more of the tricks of the trade. There's also a very high chance that they'd have worked on dozens or even hundreds of roofs just like yours over that time.

This isn't to say that a new roofer can't do a good job. Just be aware that lots of experience is a very favorable trait.

## Reputation

What do customers or your community think about this roofer? Do they have a list of referrals that you could talk to about their service? Is the roofer a part of the Better Business Bureau or participate in the local chamber of commerce?

All roofers- just like any other company- develop reputations. Sometimes that reputation is good, saying that the roofer is honest, fair and fast. Other times the reputation will be... not so good. Showing up late constantly, doing poor quality work, or overcharging the customer can lead to this bad reputation.

## License

Does your roofer have a license? They might not, as not all states require a roofer to have a professional license.

Still, it's highly recommended that you choose a roofer that took the time to get a license-whether it was necessary or not. It shows that the company is serious about being professionals and growing in their trade.

And no- we do *not* mean just a business license. This is a tax requirement and has nothing to do with the roofer's ability to do work on your house.

## Insurance

There are 2 types of insurance that a professional roofer should always carry - workman's compensation insurance and general liability insurance.

The workman's compensation insurance covers employees in case they are hurt on the job. Even though this doesn't happen too often, it inevitably happens anytime you're dealing with heavy equipment or working on ladders and roofs.

Generally a company that doesn't have workman's comp will have cheaper labor (and costs), as their labor will be more worried about their paycheck than their safety. Even though you might be willing to take the risk of having lower quality work done on your home just to save a buck, we don't recommend it.

The liability insurance is to protect YOU. When the roofer's ladder falls on your car and breaks the windshield, you want them to cover that, right? It only makes sense that the contractor would be responsible for the damages.

That's what liability insurance is for. Make sure you see a certificate of proof for their insurance.

## Budget

As you've seen, there are a few things that can affect the costs of a roofer. If they have proper insurance, their costs will likely be higher. If they work with higher quality materials or experienced workers, their costs will also be higher.

How much you're able to pay can only be determined by one person- yourself. Don't feel pressured to sign up with the first roofer you talk to just because they have a way with words. You need to consider how much you can spend, and see if you can find a roofer within that budget.

Just keep in mind that you generally get what you pay for. Saving a few bucks to go with that sketchy roofer may seem like a good idea now, but you might be singing a difference song next year when your roof starts leaking.

## Schedule

This isn't a major concern for most people, although sometimes it can be very important.

How long will it take the roofer to finish the job? If they're very sought-after and good, they might have a long waiting list before they can even get started on your house.

If that's the case, you have to trade-off between speed and quality. You may be able to find someone else who could do a good job very quickly, but there's also (usually) a reason why a roofer will have a wait list- they're good!

## To Wrap it Up...

Those are just a few things to keep in mind. Now let's look at finding the best roofer for your particular situation.



# How do I Find the Best Roofing Company for My Situation?

Everyone needs a roofer for a different reason. For example, one person might just need a small patch job to fix a leak caused by a storm last week. The next person might need an entirely new roof because it's been a few decades since it was replaced.

Each situation is different, so the first thing you need to decide is exactly what you think you need done. This will help determine both your budget and timeframe. It also gives you something to discuss with the roofer before they take a look at your roof.

Once that's done, there are a few places to start looking for your next roofer.

## Friends and Family

As mentioned in the first section, you want a roofer that has experience and a good reputation. A good way to find one that meets those qualifications is by asking people you know. Friends, family and coworkers may be able to point you towards a specific roofing company that they can (or can't!) recommend.

This works especially well with neighbors. Chances are high that your neighbors have similar houses to yours, right? Same roof, same age, and maybe the same floor plan. Even though your roofs won't be *exactly* the same, they'll go through much of the same wear and tear. Therefore a roofer who did a good job for your neighbor will probably do the same for you.

## Chamber of Commerce

If your friends or family can't recommend a roofer, talk to your local chamber of commerce. They work with a lot of companies in the area and should be able to point you towards a good roofer.

## Review Websites

Sites such as Angie's List are great for comparing different roofing companies. Customers will say what they liked/didn't like about the company, giving you a good picture of what to expect.

Keep in mind however that customers may not be extremely specific with the project that the roofer did for them. If you're just looking for a patch job, you don't necessarily need to know how well a roofer replaced an entire roof.

## **Yellow Pages or Google**

If you go through all of the above channels and still can't find a good roofer, just look through the Yellow Pages or type "roofing company" into Google. You'll definitely get a few local results, just keep in mind that it will be difficult to compare the different companies.

You could always try checking the BBB to see if they've reviewed the contractor you're considering, but keep in mind that just because the roofer isn't there doesn't mean they're a bad choice!

Once you've found a few possible contractors, it's time to conduct a phone interview to see how they hold up.

# What Should I Ask Potential Roofers Before I Hire Them?

Even though you've already done a bit of searching and filtering by this point, the interview is what will help you narrow down the choices to just 2-3 different roofers.

Keep in mind that while asking these questions, you're not just looking for *what* the roofer says to answer your questions. You also want to pay attention to *how* they answer. Are they friendly, confident and helpful? Or do they seem impatient, rushed or like they don't know what they're talking about?

Here are the actual questions to help get you started with the interview:

## **How long have you been in business?**

Experience matters!

## **Do you have a list of referrals I could talk to about your service?**

This helps you get a feel for the company's reputation, even if your family or friends have never heard of them.

## **Do you have a roofing license?**

Don't just ask if they're licensed- they might say "yes" even though it's just a business license.

## **Do you have workman's comp insurance and general liability insurance?**

These protect both yourself and the contractor in case something goes wrong.

## **Would you remove my old roof?**

A roofer shouldn't just place a new roof over the old roof, even though some do it to save money. You need the old roof removed to check for damage that may have been caused by leaks, mold, etc.

## **Do you install drip edge or edge metal with the new roof?**

This metal helps protect the roof and make it last much longer.

## **Do you clean up and remove all of the waste material?**

You don't want to get stuck cleaning up all of the broken and nasty old shingles, right?

### **Where will you place the container for refuse?**

Usually the answer is in your driveway. Just keep in mind that if the container gets too full, it could cause your driveway to crack under the high pressure. Ask the contractor how they deal with that situation.

### **What do you do in case of bad weather?**

There's not always much they can do, but the roofer should at least cover the roof with tarps.

### **What's the warranty on my roof?**

Keep in mind that you will have 2 warranties- the roofer's and the shingle manufacturer's. Make sure you understand both.

### **How much does the plywood cost if the roof is rotted?**

Sometimes contractors will leave this out and forget to mention it- make sure you know!

### **How do you protect my landscaping and property?**

There's more that can be damaged than just your home or car. Find out how the roofer prevents your grass, flowers, etc. from becoming damaged.

### **Will there be someone on site I can talk to myself?**

You want a consistent point of contact throughout the project. If new guys show up every day, you don't want to be unsure which one to talk to.

### **Can I have the estimate in writing?**

It's ALWAYS easier to avoid the "he said/she said" type of contract! Get it in paper- it's there to protect both yourself and the roofer.

### **Have you ever lost your license or last a job-related court case? If so, why?**

These may seem like you're stepping over the lines, but you're entitled to know these things before you hire a roofer. You'd want to know this kind of information before having these guys on your most valuable asset, right?

# What Do I Need to do to Prepare for a Roofing Service?

Even though the roofer will be doing most of the heavy lifting, there are a few things you should do to prepare. These preparations will minimize the risk of having damage to your home and belongings, giving both you and the roofer more piece-of-mind.

## Get it Inside

Try moving pots, plants, garden décor, and cars into the garage. These are the things most likely to get damaged during the project, so do what you can do to get them out of the way. If there's no room in the garage, store the décor and pots someplace else in the house or at the edge of the yard, and park the cars on the street, in a neighbor's driveway (with their permission of course!) or at the edge of your driveway.

## Keep it Steady

Roof installation requires a lot of banging. This can lead to unstable things tipping over or pictures falling off walls. Secure loose fixtures and other items that aren't very steady, and remove things hanging on the ceiling or walls.

## Keep it Clean

In the attic, consider laying out sheets or tarps. The repetitive hammering from the installation can cause dust and dirt to fall down, covering up anything you didn't protect with the sheets or tarps.

## Pets and Hammers don't Mix

Most pets- especially dogs- don't like the repetitive hammering that comes with a roof installation. If you have loved ones nearby that can watch them for a few days, try to get the pets out of the house. They'll be much happier being away from the constant hammering.

## Stay Home or Leave?

You can either stay home or leave during construction- it's up to you. Just keep in mind, especially with children, to be careful since you're in a construction zone!

Also, remember that constant hammering? People don't exactly like it any more than pets do. Consider having a backup plan so you don't need to stay at home all day in case the hammering bothers you.

## **“What happened to the TV?”**

You might lose signal to your TV while the roofer is doing work. This shouldn't be permanent, so don't worry. Just be aware that it might happen, so make sure you have something else to do in case the signal goes out.

## **Check Wiring**

Every once in a while roofers will come across illegal electrical wiring on a house.

...and by “every once in a while”, what we actually mean is that it's pretty common.

If you had your neighborhood handy man rig up something like cable or internet illegally, let the roofers know to watch out for it! They'll probably see it themselves, but it never hurts to be cautious.

# Understanding the Estimate and Pricing

There are a few major components of the estimate you'll receive from the roofer. Make sure this estimate is in writing, and ask them to break it out into different parts if they didn't on the initial estimate.

## Materials

You probably already know this, but the materials will be the largest part of the installation cost. You don't want to be surprised, so get a list of the materials to be used on your roof.

## Labor

The man hours put into this project include 3 main things: setup, removal/installation, and cleanup. Many customers initially forget about the cleanup aspect, which can take a few hours.

## Time of Year

Typically the winter and spring are the slowest times for roofers. You may be able to get a discount if you have the project during these times instead of the summer or fall.

## Schedule

Your potential contractor's estimate should include a schedule of when they'll perform the work and how long it will take. This will help you make plans and preparations for that week.

## Cleanup Procedures

Make sure that you understand and agree with the roofer's plan to clean up after they're done. You don't want to be surprised when the project's all done to find yourself with a huge mess.

## Warranties/Guarantees

Make sure that a warranty or guarantee is on your estimate! If something happens in the next few years that is covered by the warranty, you need proof that there was some kind of guarantee from the roofer to fix the problem.

The most important thing with your estimate is to completely understand what it says and to make sure that it's not missing anything. Even though you have probably selected a quality roofer by the time you receive a written estimate, there is a chance that they might've forgotten something or been unclear on a certain part of the estimate.

# Types of Roofing Materials

Before the roofer installs something that you have zero knowledge about, let's quickly go over the different types of roofing materials you might see. You've probably heard of most of these, but it never hurts to know all of your options.

## Asphalt

By far the most common type of shingle used on residential homes, asphalt is both economical and hardy. On average it lasts about 25 years, although it might be as low as 15 if it wasn't installed properly or takes a major beating from the weather.

## Wood

Wood was used for a very long time and is still a pretty good option. Wood shingles last about 25 years, the same length as asphalt. The problem? Wood is a bit more expensive than asphalt (sometimes twice as much) and can be damaged more easily.

## Metal

Even though metal roofs are extremely durable, some types are also very expensive. The main reason why most people don't use metal is that it's the least attractive of the major types of roofing materials. That said- the sound of rain on a metal roof is pretty soothing!

## Tile or Cement

The Spanish Colonial and Mission style homes tend to use cement or tile. These are extremely durable, but they're also expensive and very heavy.

## Slate

Slate is the most expensive- and durable- of roofing materials. It can last as long as one hundred years, but expect to pay about 16 times as much as an asphalt. Plus slate is very heavy, which most homes are not designed to hold up for decades at a time.

## Which one is the “best”?

There's a reason why most people use asphalt shingles. They're light, inexpensive and durable. But if you have a strong desire for another type- especially if you have a Spanish Colonial or Mission-style home- then that's your choice.

## Checklist for Hiring a Roofer

This short checklist will help wrap everything up and make sure you don't miss a step in this process.

- Determine if you need a whole new roof or just a patch job
- Ask friends, family and coworkers if they can recommend a roofer
- Do research about local roofers (local CoC, Google and BBB)
- Interview at least 3 potential roofers over the phone
- Select the best roofer for your situation
- Receive an estimate in writing and make sure you understand all of it
- Make plans and preparations for the project (pets, cars, garden décor, wall paintings, etc.)
- Get the contact info for your roofer's point of contact
- Ensure that the contractor cleans up in accordance with the estimate
- Enjoy your new roof!

## Conclusion

Hiring a roofer isn't fun, but it doesn't need to be a nightmare either. The most important thing is to do your research and know what you're investing in. There should be no surprises- investing in something this large is stressful enough!

We hope this short report was helpful to you, and please feel free to contact us if there's anything else we can do to help with your next roofing project.