

| Help for Hire |

Contractor interview checklist

- Make sure the company has insurance, current remodeling and building licenses, liability and workman's compensation.
- Check that they are members in good standing of local and national associations.
- Check Angie's List.
- Gather a long list of references.
- Be sure that the company gives you a timeline for the project.
- The company should also give you detailed pricing specs that are more than one page long (including what they are and are NOT doing).
- Are they proficient in all types/styles/eras of homes?
- Ask about their relationship with subcontractors — have they worked together for many years or are they simply the cheapest (no long-standing relationship)?
- The company should make shopping easy — suggest showrooms to visit, help make material selections to client taste.
- The company should be willing to meet in person and follow up with calls and e-mails.
- The company should be knowledgeable and recommend materials that fit within your budget and be flexible to creative solutions.
- Choose companies that listen to you, remember what you say and follow through.
- The company should respect your home, family and pets, and should work around your schedule.
- Be sure to agree upon a payment schedule before the contract is signed.
- The contract should specify a start date, a completion date and a payment schedule — for example, 10 percent down, 10 to 15 percent after each major milestone and the final 10 percent only upon satisfactory completion of the project.

—*Laura Orfield-Skrivseth, vice president and owner, Orfield Design and Construction, St. Louis Park*