



Fast Facts

The Contractors State License Board, which operates under the umbrella of the California Department of Consumer Affairs, licenses and regulates California's contractors, and is regarded as one of the leading consumer protection agencies in the United States.

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CheckTheLicenseFirst.com

Construction Project Checklist

Finding a Contractor, Getting Bids, Reviewing the Contract

Contractors hired for construction work in California that costs \$1,000 or more in labor and materials combined must be licensed by CSLB. Additionally, any project needing a permit or workers requires a licensed contractor.

Once you select a contractor make sure you receive a detailed written contract. Don't sign the contract until you understand all the terms.

FINDING YOUR CONTRACTOR

- ✓ Use the [Find My Licensed Contractor](#) feature on CSLB's website (www.cslb.ca.gov) to find licensed contractors in your area.
- ✓ Use the [License Check](#) feature on CSLB's website or call 800-321-CSLB (2752) to confirm the contractor is licensed and that they have workers' compensation insurance* if they have employees.
- ✓ Research your contractors' name online for additional reviews.

GETTING BIDS

- ✓ Get at least three contractors to give you an estimate, along with references. Call references and ask questions about the projects.
- ✓ Ask to see the contractor's pocket license and confirm their identity with a current photo ID.
- ✓ Ask if the contractor carries general liability insurance to cover accidental damage to your property.
- ✓ Ask the contractor if they understand your project expectations and timeline.
- ✓ Other questions for your contractor include:
 - Do you have employees? Are they on your payroll? Do you carry workers' compensation for employees?
 - Are you hiring licensed subcontractors?
 - Do you provide lien notices for your subcontractors and material suppliers?

* NOTE: All active C-8, C-20, C-22, C-39, and D-49 contractors must carry workers' compensation insurance or a valid Certification of Self-Insurance, **whether or not they have employees.**

- When can you start the project and what is the timeline?
- Who will oversee the work each day?
- Will you obtain the building permits and schedule inspections? (The contractor should pull all necessary permits.)
- How experienced are you with this type of project? Will you provide me prior client referrals?
- What days and hours do you work?
- Do you clean up at the end of the day?
- Are there potential issues with this project that could arise?
- If a workmanship issue occurs after the job is completed, will you fix it free of charge?
- Have you previously operated as a contractor under a different business name? If so, what name?
- Has your business ever filed bankruptcy?

HOME IMPROVEMENT CONTRACT—GET IT IN WRITING

- ✓ Avoid signing a contract on an electronic device. Ask for a paper copy and take your time reading it. You have three days after signing to cancel the contract (in writing). Seniors have five days to cancel per law.
- ✓ Make sure all project materials and expectations are detailed, including cleanup, debris removal, and site security. For more information about what to include in a contract see [Terms of Agreement](#) available on CSLB's website.
- ✓ Make sure all changes to the contract, or "change orders," are in writing and signed by both parties.
- ✓ Pay no more than 10% down or \$1,000, whichever is less.* Schedule and document each phase of your project and the progress payment schedule. Don't let payments get ahead of the work and avoid making the final payment until you're satisfied with the work. Don't pay in cash, unless the contractor gives you a receipt.
- ✓ Make sure you're given the names and contractor license numbers of subcontractors that may work on your project, as well as the names of material suppliers.
- ✓ Keep your project documents, including payments and pictures, in a job file.

*Exception: Contractors with a blanket performance and payment bond on file, which will be listed on the license detail.