

## 12 Things You Need to Know Before Hiring an Electrician

Construction repairs and upgrades to your home or building is a VERY risky proposition! The reality is that construction projects can go bad quickly which translates into lost time, frustration, and spending much more money than anticipated. So it's worth your time to carefully plan out the project and research the electricians before you begin. If you want to greatly improve the chances of your next construction project going smoothly, *here are 12 things you need to know before you hire an electrician...or even simpler...hire a Build 12 electrician!*



### 1 Select only licensed and qualified electricians:

Is the electrician properly licensed by the State? Any job that costs \$300 or more should be performed by a professional who holds a current, valid license from the Electricians State License Board in the specialty for which he/she is contracting.

Ask to see the electrician's license and some additional form of identification. The name on the license should be the same as the name of the electrician or business under which he/she is operating. Take this one step further and call the Electricians State License Board to make sure the license is valid.

Even if the electrician is licensed, you may also want to find out whether he/she is a member of a trade association or professional cooperative that establishes a code of ethics or standards for their trade. Contact local affiliate chapters to see whether they will act as an intermediary in case of disputes or arrange for an impartial arbitrator.

### 2 Obtain competitive bids:

Get at least three bids for the project and do not automatically accept the lowest price. Make sure all bids are in writing and are based on the same set of specifications, materials, and scope of work. Discuss the bids in detail with each electrician to ensure you understand the reasons for any price variations. Sometimes a higher price can be substantiated due to higher quality materials or custom work.

### 3 Check the electrician's references:

Ask the electrician for local references and contact them to see if they were satisfied with the electrician's work and timeliness of project completion. If possible, go out and look at finished projects or jobs in progress similar to yours. This will give you a good idea of how the electrician works. Ask the homeowners about the workers' demeanor, any inconveniences they may have experienced and the sensitivity of the electricians to their living space. Be sure to ask the references these questions:

- Did the electrician keep to the schedule and contract terms?
- Were you pleased with the work and the manner in which it was done?
- Did the electrician listen to you when you had a problem and seem willing to resolve it?

In addition to talking to past customers, obtain references from their material suppliers, subelectricians and financial institutions to determine whether they are financially responsible.

Lastly, ask the electrician for their business address and telephone number and verify them. An electrician who operates out of the back of a truck with a cellular phone may be difficult to track down to complete or fix a job that has gone wrong after the bill is paid.

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### Make sure the electrician measures up:

Check out potential electricians by contacting local consumer protection organizations: building department, trade association or union, consumer protection agency, consumer fraud unit or district attorney's office, and Better Business Bureau. Ask them how long the company has been in business and find out if there have been any complaints about them.

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### Verify an electrician's workers' compensation and liability insurance coverage:

All electricians and their employees should have the necessary insurances to protect them against claims covering workers' compensation, property damage, and personal liability in case of accidents. Ask to see a copy of the certificate of insurance or ask for the name of their insurance carrier/agency to verify adequate coverage. Checking insurance coverage is critical as a homeowner. If a worker is injured on your property and the electrician does not have insurance, you are the one who will have to pay for the injured worker's injuries and rehabilitation (if necessary). Don't let your home-owner's insurance policy become your electrician's liability coverage!

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### 6 Secure an electrician Bond(s) for large projects:

Bonding is typically required for large projects financed by lenders and may be obtained from bonding companies for a percentage of the contract price. Take into consideration the cost of the various bonds that may be required to cover the project and factor this into the overall cost of the job.

There are several classifications of bonds, so become familiar with the coverage and stipulations of each required for your particular project.

While some bonds are designed to protect you against substandard work that does not comply with local building codes, they do not cover or assure the professional integrity or competency of an electrician. However, for an electrician to qualify for bonding, it must practice sound business techniques.

### 7 Negotiate a contract:

Even if the work is being done by someone you know well, make sure you have a written contract. This will ensure everyone is clear of what is to be done, how much it will cost, and a schedule for completion. The process of negotiating a contract also helps you get more comfortable asking questions and talking about the process with the electrician, making ongoing communication much easier.

Make sure there is an arbitration clause in your contract and that the electrician agrees to arbitrate any disputes that may arise.

### 8 Contracts should include *all* project details:

Before actual work begins, make sure the contract specifies, in detail, all materials to be used for the project including quality, quantity, weight, color, size, and brand (as it may apply).

Make sure your contract includes everything you feel is important to the job, including clean-up, removal of debris and materials, and special requests, like saving scrap lumber for firewood or saving certain materials for appliances. Also, give instructions regarding pets, children or areas where materials may not be stored. Should project scope change after the work has begun, make sure the discussed changes are amended in the original contract.

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### Know your consumer rights:

Familiarize yourself with Georgia's "Georgia Secretary of State" [www.sos.ga.gov/plb](http://www.sos.ga.gov/plb). While these may vary slightly from state-to-state, as a consumer you can exercise your rights and have certain responsibilities when making home improvements.

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### Warranties:

All warranties offered by an electrician for labor and materials and guarantees for workmanship should be in writing. It should specify which parts of the work are covered and the duration of the warranty. You should also request any written warranties offered by the manufacturers of materials and/or appliances installed by the electrician.

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### Understand the costs:

Before the electrician begins the job, make sure you know how you're going to be charged. Is it by the hour? Is it by the job? Is there a separate cost for giving you an estimate, and if you decide to go with that company, will that estimate be included in the overall price for the project?

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### Recognize the signs of trouble:

Cash only is a problem. So is an electrician without a business card. The company business card should have more than a cell phone number on it. It should have a physical address of an office, even if that office is a home office. And never deal with anyone who tells you that the great price they're offering is only available today, demands that the entire job be paid for in advance, or can't answer questions to your satisfaction.

*This brief is meant to be informative and assist consumers in choosing an electrician. The Build12 Group encourages all consumers to do a thorough research of any service provider prior to contracting them for hire. The Build12 Group does not assume responsibility for any damage that arises from any action based on information found in this report.*



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