

Ten Things You Must Consider *Before You Hire a Contractor!*

Hiring a residential construction contractor can be a nerve-wracking experience. What questions do you need to ask? How do you know who to trust? Where is the quicksand, and how do you avoid it? There are also money-saving considerations... how do you hire a company who will help you develop and stick to a budget?

There are many good contractors to choose from in this market. The trick is knowing how to tell the good ones from the not-so-good ones. I wrote this report to help homeowners narrow their choices down to contractors operating by standard "best practices."

1. Is the contractor licensed, bonded, insured, and registered with the state?

Avoid the liabilities of a "gypsy contractor."

A "gypsy contractor" may be from out of town, or may not be properly bonded, insured, or registered with the state. This is important because if they don't have a legal business, there is limited recourse should anything go wrong. Furthermore, if the contractor does not have a good accounting system, Washington State's lien laws could force you to pay the same bill twice! And a brand new lead paint handling law mandates the field superintendant be certified in lead handling procedures.

D.L. Rees Contracting LLC, complies with all Washington State laws. We are licensed, bonded, and insured. Our registration number is DLREERC893NT (Go to <https://fortress.wa.gov/lni/bbip/Search.aspx> to verify registration.) We use professional book keepers to monitor all our major accounts, and are certified lead handlers

2. Is the contractor experienced in the type of building or remodeling that you wish to do?

Verify that the contractor has knowledge and experience in the necessary areas of expertise.

Residential remodeling is different from new construction, because the existing home must be protected. Commercial buildings do not require the high quality finishes of residential homes. And, handymen may not be able to follow plans for an architectural addition.

Further, if your project requires multiple sub-contractors, make sure the contractor has the experience to successfully oversee the trades and billings.

Having grown up in custom residential building, and graduated with a masters degree in construction management, Doug Rees has the experience to manage your project – check out our publications and portfolio at DLRees.com.

3. Will the contractor be personally building your home?

Find out who is going to be running the daily operations of your building or remodeling project.

Frequently, the general contractor is too busy to personally oversee your project, so after the contract is signed, he hands it off to his team for construction. Find out who his team is. How much experience does the superintendant have in managing projects? How much hands-on, construction experience does the project manager have? And, do you really need to be paying for a manager *and* a superintendant?

Doug Rees personally works on all of his projects. Eliminating the middleman not only reduces costs, but also creates better lines of communication.

4. Do they have relationships with the needed sub-contractors, and can they provide multiple options?

You're not just hiring a contractor, you're hiring whoever they hire.

An experienced, local contractor will have relationships with many different sub-contractors. They should be able to “match make” the right subcontractor for the job, depending on what type of work is required. (And, of course, their sub-contractors will always be licensed, bonded and insured!)

With over 20 years of experience building custom residential homes and remodels around the Lake Washington area, D.L. Rees Contracting has a treasure trove of great tradesmen and suppliers to work with. Many have worked with Doug for years and prioritize his work over others.

5. Does the contractor provide a solid, detailed estimate?

Make sure the bid is complete and accurate.

A contractor's estimate should be easy to read, with costs clearly defined, and scope of work accurately described. The proposal should also include a schedule. The estimate and schedule are part of the contract, just like the plans. These are essential pieces of a successful project.

It is crucial to have a good handle on costs and timing before construction begins. This gives you the opportunity to prioritize the “must haves” from the “phase 2” items, and keep costs under control.

Doug Rees is known for his accurate planning, detailed estimates and reliable schedules.

6. Does the Contractor offer a Guaranteed Price Contract?

Confident, competent contractors stand behind their estimates.

Accepting a Time and Materials bid is only worth the risk if the job is small, needs to be done quickly, or the final design that can't be determined until the work is in progress. A Guaranteed Price Contract, based on a detailed estimate and periodic budget reviews, eliminates unnecessary risk.

D.L. Rees Contracting believes that Guaranteed Price Contracts make the contractor a partner in keeping costs down, by shouldering the responsibility for unauthorized or unexplained costs.

7. How is the contractor's accounting handled?

You are entrusting your money as well as your home.

Not all contractors make good accountants. A too-common practice in the construction industry is for clients' funds to be deposited in the contractor's general bank account. This allows funds from your project to pay invoices from other projects. If the contractor's book keeper is not monitoring costs carefully, financial shortages from old projects eat into the new project's funds before anyone knows it!

To avoid being caught up in a contractors 'Rob Peter, to pay Paul' drama, insist your funds be held in a dedicated account. Also ask for lien releases from all major sub-contractors and suppliers.

D.L. Rees Contracting uses dedicated bank accounts, with website monitoring privileges, for all its major clients. In addition, a 3rd party, professional book keeping service runs the book keeping. DL Rees Contracting provides a lien release, authenticating sub accounts have been paid, with every monthly billing.

8. Can the contractor provide you with References to call?

It is an excellent idea to check references.

If a contractor does not offer references... beware! Hopefully they do provide references, and the opportunity to find out others' experiences. Ask if their projects were similar to

yours. Inquire if a contractor is easy to work with and delivers high quality work for a fair price. Most importantly, make sure they are true to their word and stand behind their work.

D.L. Rees Contracting has great references. See our Testimonial page, and more are available upon request.

9. Have you called a few contractors?

Interview several contractors to determine the right fit for you.

Find out how different builders work, and look for someone you trust. Ask questions. Any undertaking can have its frustrations, and you want to know you can rely on your contractor. Don't let anyone pressure you to sign a contract before you have had a chance to consider your options.

D.L. Rees Contracting is here to help, and will provide you with great information to help you make your choices. Visit our Resource Page at www.DLRees.com/Resources for more helpful links and information, including our "Tips" series for Well-Built Kitchens, Baths, Decks and Homes.

10. How will communication be handled throughout the project?

Communication is the key to a healthy team and a successful project.

A common complaint is that homeowners feel "out of the loop" on their own project. They may feel unsure about what happens next, how much money has been spent, or the cost and feasibility of making changes as they go. Equally important is the contractors communication style... do you feel you can talk to them?

At D.L. Rees Contracting, we realize this is the most important job of the contractor. We are available by phone or email daily, and tie our daily communications together in a weekly meeting, complete with minutes, cost updates and action plans. Our business philosophy is simple, we want you to be proud of our work, and tell your friends about us with a smile!

Bonus Tip #11: Start with a clear set of plans and goals.

The best way to eliminate change orders is before they happen.

Reviewing the plans for constructability and financial feasibility is one of the most valuable tools a contractor can provide. A constructability preview assesses less expensive ways to build the same design. Sometimes a contractor's field experience is useful in determining alternate means of building for less. Financial feasibility is a preview for costs and options. Frequently, there are multiple suppliers that can provide similar services, for less cost.

A good contractor can help your project run smoothly and go as planned, while most potential problems can be avoided by simply choosing a well-suited company.

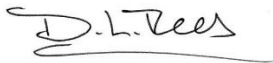
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Thank-you for reading our special report, ***“Ten Things You Must Consider Before You Hire a Contractor!”***

Please also see the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries publication on Hiring a Contractor at <http://www.lni.wa.gov/IPUB/625-084-000.pdf> (an essential resource for this special report.)

We know you have choices, and we appreciate your consideration. Give D.L. Rees Contracting a call today for a free initial consultation. Let us put our 30 years of hard won experience and education to work for you!

If you have questions, comments, or if you'd like to discuss your next project, please give us a call!



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Doug Rees is a master builder, with over 30 years experience in custom, residential building and remodeling. Doug's carpentry apprenticeship ranges from renovating hand crafted, 18th Century homes in New England, to the more production orientated 'St. of Dreams' houses of the 90's. Doug received his Masters in Construction Management at UW, and quality Seattle Builders such as Schultz-Miller and Odyssey Builders have relied on him to manage their projects. *DL Rees Contracting has the experience you can count on; ask our clients.*

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