



Being a Responsible Homeowner

When and How to Hire a Professional

Being a Responsible Homeowner: When and How to Hire a Professional

Ivan Hernandez and Constance Kratzer, Ph.D.

Do-it-yourself (DIY) projects have skyrocketed in popularity in recent years with the increase in popular home improvement television shows and publications. For certain home improvements, a DIY project can be rewarding and fun if you are prepared and have the proper skills. Before you start knocking down walls and taking out wiring, ask the following questions:

- Do I have a clear idea of how I want my project to look?
- Do I have the time to complete this project (be realistic!)?
- Have I undertaken a project like this before?
- Do I know what I will need (materials, tools, etc.) to complete the project?
- Am I familiar with the applicable building codes and permits?
- Do I enjoy physical labor?
- Do I have all the tools I will need?
- Do I have the necessary skills for this project?
- If not, do I have the time and resources to learn these skills?
- Where will I obtain the necessary materials?
- If the project can not be completed according to the original schedule, am I (and my family) prepared to handle the resulting inconvenience?
- Will I need assistance with this project? If so, who will assist me? Do they have the time and

skills required for this project?

- Do I understand all the safety issues associated with this project?
- Am I familiar with the architecture and structural makeup of my home (i.e. how knocking down one wall will affect the rest of the structure)?
- Have I considered the hidden costs associated with doing it myself – time, tools, and the possibility that I may actually decrease the value of my house if the result is not up to professional standards?

It is easy to look at the cost of hiring a professional contractor and think only of labor and materials. But remember that a professional contractor offers you an important service – years of experience, the right tools, a network of suppliers and subcontractors, and an in-depth understanding of legal regulations, cost estimating, scheduling, and the latest construction techniques.

Hiring a professional

Hiring a professional to help with home repairs or home improvement projects may be one of the most important things you do. Ask for a written estimate of the work to be done based on a set of plans and specifications. This is a time-consuming process for the contractor, so be prepared to pay for it.

Make sure you compare apples to apples.

Estimates from different contractors need to be based on identical project specifications.

Get at least three bids before hiring a contractor. However, do not let price alone drive your selection. Do not automatically select the lowest bidder. If you like a contractor and are confident that he or she would do a quality job, you may want to consider paying more for this professional. A contractor may be able to lower the estimate if it is more than you can afford by making a few modifications to your current design or by using alternative fixtures or appliances.

*This resource is one in a series on **Being a Responsible Homeowner** which include:*

Getting to Know Your New Home

Maintenance Repairs, Home Improvements
Universal Design for Easy Living
When and How to Hire a Professional

Financial Issues for Responsible Homeowner

Financial Responsibilities
Predatory Lending

Managing Financial Difficulties

Foreclosure

Legal Responsibilities

Sponsored by New Mexico State University and the City of Las Cruces. Supported by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and educator. NMSU and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. © 2005 NMSU Board of Regents. All rights reserved.



Being a Responsible Home Owner: When and How to Hire a Professional