

What You Need to Know Before Hiring an Electrician



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Most licensed electricians are competent, hardworking, honest individuals who possess the knowledge to complete any electrical task they are confronted with in a professional manner. They will charge the customer appropriately and take care of any issues that might occur after the job is completed. Unfortunately, there are those individuals who will try to take advantage of the fact that the client has no knowledge of electrical matters and places trust solely in the contractor's abilities. Therefore, it is important that the consumer be informed before hiring a contractor in order to avoid being victimized.

Here you will find some simple guidelines to follow when hiring an electrician.

Always Check the Electricians License

This is of the utmost importance. In Delaware, any contractor who does a job must hold a current, valid license from the State Board of Electrical Examiners in the specialty for which he or she is contracting. Should you hire a contractor who does not possess proper licensing, the Contractor's Board may not be able to assist you with any complaint and civil court may be your only alternative for resolution. This process can be very time consuming and end up costing a good deal of money. Additionally, the job you initially hired the electrician for still needs to be corrected by a properly licensed contractor.

Electrical Solutions license # is T1-4480.

Avoid These Common Misconceptions

- **An electrician without any Better Business Bureau complaints must be qualified.** The BBB is not a government agency and does not keep a record on every electrician doing business.
- **The lowest price saves you money. Sometimes a lower bid may mean shortcuts.** Make sure you and the electrician both understand all the work that is included in the price.
- **Doing the job yourself will save money.** Chances are you do not possess the know-how to complete the job and will end up having to hire a contractor to complete and repair anything you were unable to do.
- **Many years of experience means quality work.** There are lots of contractors out there who can boast many years in the business, but that says nothing about the quality of the work they've done in that time. Electrical Solutions has been in business since 1989 and continues to grow even through some very tough economic times.

Ten Questions To Ask

1. **Are You Licensed?** Always check the license number.
2. **Do you carry general liability insurance?** This will protect your property in the event of damage by the electrician or employees and will pay for repair of any damage that may occur. Ask to see proof of insurance.
3. **Do you carry workers' compensation insurance?** This will protect you from liability in the event a worker is injured on the job. Otherwise, you may be liable. Once again, you need to verify the validity of the insurance by asking to see proof of insurance.
4. **Will you pull all the required building permits?** When this is done, you know the work will be done to "code." A reputable electrician will permit every job where required.
5. **Do you guarantee your work?** Ask that your contractor guarantee the work for at least one year from completion. Electrical Solutions guarantees its workmanship for two years.
6. **What percentage of your business is repeat or referral?** When much of the contractor's business is derived from repeat clients it is safe to assume customer satisfaction.
7. **How many projects like mine have you completed in the last year?** It's good to know that the electrician has dealt with your specific issue.
8. **How do you handle "dirty work?"** If any construction work is involved in the project, there is the distinct possibility it will generate a good deal of dust and debris. Make sure the contractor intends to keep dust contained and clean up each day.

When you hire an electrician, you are paying for a service, and the quality of that service will determine the quality of the finished project. Hiring a professional electrician is a very important step in bringing your expectations to life. To make that final step as easy as possible, take the time to do the homework. Once you've established the contractor's good reputation, you need also to consider the interpersonal relationship you share, especially if the project will take an extended period to complete.

What is Necessary For a Good Working Relationship?

1. **Good Communication.** You need to be able to work out details and solve any issues that might arise throughout the duration of the project. Establish how you will reach your electrical contractor and that he will listen to you when you communicate.
2. **Comfort.** You are essentially inviting a stranger into your home. Is he/she someone you are comfortable enough with to do so?
3. **Trustworthiness.** You may very well have to be absent much of the time while your electrician is working. It is important you feel secure leaving your home while the contractor is present.
4. **Completion.** Make sure the electrician gives you a reasonable estimate for how long the project will take.
5. **Written Proposal.** Ask for a detailed written proposal showing what is included in the project: brand names when needed, costs and payment schedule.
6. **Details.** Talk about debris disposal, daily work start and end times, anything that might be an issue during the project.
7. **Flexibility.** Be sure you are ready to live with any changes that may be required while the project is being completed. You may be without power for a portion of the day, for example.
8. **Appearance.** A little cleanliness goes a long way.
9. **Down Payment.** The electrician should not ask for a big chunk of money up front. A down payment should not exceed \$1,000 or 10% of the contract price, whichever is less. Electrical Solutions requires no down payment.



Finally, as is generally the case, a complete, clear contract is your best defense against any of the mishaps and mayhem that can occur. Detail is key. Make sure you cover everything.

Your Contract Checklist:

___ The electrician's name, address, and license number is on the contract.

___ A description of the work to be done, a description of the materials and equipment to be used or installed and the price for the work. Anything your electrician has verbally promised, pledged, guaranteed, warranted, asserted, denoted, agreed to, or vowed.

___ A copy of all detailed specifications, drawings, or blueprints (if applicable) upon project completion.

___ A detailed list of all materials to be used including quantity, brand name, and model number (if provided by electrician).

___ A schedule of payments showing the amount of each payment in dollars and cents.

___ If the payment schedule contained in the contract provides for a down payment, it cannot exceed \$1,000 or 10 percent of the contract price (excluding finance charges), whichever is less.

___ Information About Commercial General Liability Insurance & worker's compensation.

___ Pre-work, ongoing and post-work site cleanup procedures.

Final payment should be made upon final walk through with your electrical contractor and approval.

Make sure all work outlined in the contract has been completed and any corrective work or repairs as a result of contractor error or carelessness has been taken care.

If you've taken the time to find a quality, trustworthy electrician and created a complete and clear contract that spells everything out to the letter, you've virtually guaranteed yourself a happy and healthy Electrical Repair and Installation.