

Contractor Name:

Member of NARI or NAHB or other professional organization?	
Registered with the Better Business Bureau?	
Carries Workers' Compensation and general liability insurance?	
Any adverse filing with the local Office of Consumer Affairs?	

References:

Did the contractor stay on budget?	
Was the job completed in a timely manner?	
How was the workmanship quality?	
Were the construction workers reliable and trustworthy?	
Were the construction workers employees or subcontractors? If subcontractors, did the general contractor guarantee their work and ensure that they carried the proper insurance?	
Did the contractor work onsite or was it only his/her employees? Did he/she supervise or delegate to a project foreman?	
Were there any unanticipated problems?	
How did the contractor handle them?	
Was the job site kept safe and clean?	
Were the punch list items handled properly and in a timely manner?	
Would you hire the contractor again?	

Make sure the contract includes the following:

- Contractor's name, address, telephone number, and license number.
- Start dates and projected completion dates.
- Payment schedule.
- Contractor insurance information.
- Provision for conflict resolutions in case a dispute arises.
- Clause giving you the right to cancel the contract within 3 business days.
- Statement that the contractor will obtain and purchase all necessary permits.
- Specifics on duties of homeowner and duties of contractor (i.e., clean-up, trash removal, hours of access, workers' use of your phone and bathroom permission, if any, and timeframe for lunch).
- Project specifications (i.e., precise materials, appliance brands, measurements, etc.).
- Visual representation of the project, if possible.
- Written warranty covering materials and workmanship, including length of warranty.
- Specification on how changes to original plan will be handled.
- Clause for final inspection and sign-off prior to final payment.

Helpful hints:

- Look closely at the budget to see which line items are actual numbers and which are allowances. Allowances are merely placeholder estimates and actual costs can be higher, significantly increasing the budget.
- Most remodeling projects exceed the actual budget – be sure to have a buffer savings in case project costs increase.
- If you are on a tight budget, resist "scope creep" – it may be more cost-efficient to do an added project during the current construction than at a later date, but it's even more cost-effective not to do it at all.
- Be realistic about your wants and needs for the remodeling project and do not get carried away.
- To save money, consider purchasing your own appliances, light fixtures, etc. Contractors often tack on a surcharge to purchase these items for you.