

# Key interview questions to ask painters, before you hire!

At Pearl Painters we realize “*you’re the boss*”. We also realize that you’re looking to hire a professional for your project. We believe consumers should approach hiring a painting contractor much like an employer would for a position in their own company... Get to know them, make sure you can work with them. Find out who you’re allowing into your home. You are entrusting this company and their employees with your personal possessions your family and your home. With the following information and interview questions we hope to arm you with good information you can truly use to compare one company to the next and make the best choice possible.

## **Questions to ask before you hire an exterior painter!**

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## **Exterior Check list / Questions**

### **Do this 1<sup>st</sup> before you schedule an estimate: *“If they don’t pass, they don’t bid”!***

Before you schedule an estimate with any painting company you should confirm the following items: **\*\*\*Note** items that are marked with a **\*\*\*** are state law, they are NOT optional. If you hire a contractor that is operating illegally you lose the ability to recover damages through the bond as well you lose the support of the Oregon CCB and their Dispute Resolution Service.

- **\*\*\***Before calling any contractor, always confirm that they are licensed with the ORCCB, bonded, and insured for property damage. Additionally, all workers that step onto your property must be named on the CCB license as an owner, otherwise they are considered employees and must be on a workers compensation insurance policy that protects you from being liable for injuries that happen on your property.
- Verify an active ORCCB License, Liability Insurance, and a Surety Bond @ [www.oregon.gov/ccb](http://www.oregon.gov/ccb) input your contractors CCB # to see all the details (our CCB# is 164514)
- Verify an active Workers Compensation Insurance policy @ <http://www4.cbs.state.or.us/ex/wcd/cov/#current>
- Before you schedule an estimate **Do your homework...** Use the following list of questions that we provide to zero in on your expectations. It is these expectations that must be set with your contractor that will ensure you of getting exactly what you want. This is the only way to get truly comparable bids.

### **Do this 2<sup>nd</sup> Scope of work: What is it and how do I get one?**

If you’re like most homeowners you likely have an idea of what you’re looking for but far too often homeowners are vague with their specifications. If you’re not comfortable writing your own detailed scope of work any professional painting company should work with you to create one. Walk around your house and think about the level of preparation and care that must happen in order for you to be happy. Try to determine how you want finishes to be applied otherwise you might not be satisfied with the results. The best practice is to put into writing exactly what you want done, level of prep, application method, number of coats, brand of paint, and type of paint, sheen level, color name and # as well as any other detail that is important to you and the success of your project.

### **Do this 3<sup>rd</sup> – *This is the hard part* – “Don’t be afraid to ask pointed questions, if a contractor gets defensive or won’t answer your questions, don’t hire them, move on with other bids until you find what and who you’re looking for”!**

**Surface Preparation** -- Do you pressure wash or hand wash, will you use a cleaning agent, will it harm my plants/animals, how do you know if the surface is dry enough to paint, will you use a moisture meter to ensure the surface is dry enough, what is a safe % range on the moisture meter, will you scrape all loose paint, even on the trim that is 30 ft in the air, what areas will you sand, what areas will you prime, what kind of primer will you use, how long will you let the primer dry before you paint, will you correct failing caulking, what type of caulking do you use, how thoroughly will you mask and tape to protect my windows, brick, foundation, roof, plants decks, cars, etc. from overspray, drips and spills? Require your bidder to note in the contract that you will have an opportunity to inspect and approve the surface preparation before moving onto the painting stage!



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**Protection Requirements**— How do you prevent overspray, drips and spills on my roof, brick, deck, car etc.?

**Paint Application** -- How will you apply the paint, will you spray, spray & back brush, spray & back roll, hand paint, (*Remember different surfaces require different application methods that will affect the appearance, longevity and cost*) how many coats will you apply, what's the difference between one heavy coat and two normal coats, please define what you call 2 coats, is that spraying one direction and then going back over it and calling that 2 coats or do you let the 1<sup>st</sup> coat dry and then apply the 2<sup>nd</sup> coat, how will you paint my front door, will you remove it or paint it in place, how do you know that you are applying the paint at the correct mill thickness, (*Applying paint too thick or too thin will void manufacturers warranties*) what brand and type of paint do you recommend, what is the best sheen level for my project, will you use enamel on my front door, what if the paint does not cover in the number of coats that you specified, is there a potential for more cost, what surfaces are included and excluded? Require the bidder to will you allow me to inspect at the end of the project before your crew leaves and correct all touch ups before I pay the final balance?

**Clean up** -- What do you do with garbage that is produced from my project, do you take it away or do you put it in my garbage, what do you do with the left over paint, where do you clean your brushes, rollers, spray equipment, what do you do with dirty solvent used to clean oil paint from brushes / sprayers?

**Payment Schedule** -- Do you require a deposit? If not how do I know that you are committed to do my project before it rains? Confirm that final payment will not be made until project has been inspected by you, the homeowner, and is to your complete satisfaction (i.e. Contract is complete as agreed, no additional touch ups to be done, all clean up is finished).

**Comparing Cost** – **“Make sure you're comparing apples to apples, not just focusing on the price!”** Require your bidder to provide an itemized number of labor hours required for each task. As well require them to disclose the total amount they are charging you for paint and all related sundries. Without this detailed breakdown you have no idea what you're getting. Require the bidder in writing to lock in on a firm price/bid that won't change even if it takes longer or more materials are needed than expected? Ask the bidder to make note in their contract, that final payment will not be made until all work has been inspected and approved by you.

### **Do this Last: Checking References** – **“Don't make the same mistakes that others have!!!”**

Remember, any company can come up with 3 positive references... Dig deeper! Determine exactly who the lead painter is that (what is their name?) will be in charge of your project and get their last 3-5 projects in chronological order as well you should get a couple of other referrals from clients that have projects similar to yours. **NOW ACTUALLY CALL THEM!** Ask if they were happy with this person, if they would re-hire this person, would they refer this person, did anything go wrong, did they start and finish as promised, how was the quality, did the workers appear to be trustworthy, did the price change from the original agreement, could they offer any advice that would ensure things went smoother? It's highly recommended that you ask your bidder if they could arrange to meet the crew and see an active jobsite while in progress.

**Trust your gut** -- Does hiring this Painting Company feel right? Do I think this Company can complete my project to my satisfaction? If a problem arises, will it be easy to communicate with them to get the issue resolved? Can I trust this person and their employees in my house with my family and personal possessions for the duration of this project?

### **Things to remember!**

- Get all contracts and/or agreements in writing!!!—**“If it's not in writing don't expect to get it”**
- Painting is NOT a commodity. If the cost is less or more, the quality and the experience will be different.
- If it is too good to be true, something is missing, dig into the details, make sure that you understand and agree to the level of quality and service that you are purchasing.