

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 interior painter!

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Interior Check list / Questions

Do this 1st 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 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 2nd 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. Go through your project and think about what rooms/surfaces you want finished. 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 3rd – **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”!

Require you bidder to agree to the following:

Expected start and finish date, expected start and finish time for each day, working on your project until it is complete with no missed days or delays, a plan regarding gaining access to your home as well as lockup procedures, location for equipment storage, location for spraying removable items such as cabinet doors or walk through doors (your house or their shop?), location for brush and rollers cleanup, smoking policy (yes or no?), which bathroom can be used or require them to have a portable bathroom be placed outside for the crew’s use.

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Protection Requirements—who moves the furniture, how do you protect floors, furniture, breakables, electronics, window coverings etc.,

Surface Preparation – How do you clean the surfaces prior to painting, what do you use and why, how do you address nail pops, dents, holes, cracks and texture issues, what do you do to ensure paint will stick to glossy surfaces, will you prime, will it be oil or water based? Require you 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!

Paint Application -- How will you apply the paint, will you spray, spray & back brush, spray & back roll hand paint? *Different surfaces require different application methods that will affect the appearance and longevity. Determine what is best for your needs and make sure the final plan is noted in the contract*) How many coats will you apply, what's the difference between one heavy coat and two normal coats, how will you paint my cabinets, will you remove the doors or attempt to paint them 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 and result in paint failures*), what type brand and type of paint do you recommend, what's the best sheen for my project, what if the paint does not cover in the number of coats that you specify, is there a potential for more cost, how do you ensure clean straight color transition lines, what surfaces are included and excluded?

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 start and finish my project on time? 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.

Comparing Cost – **“Make sure you're comparing apples to apples, not just focusing on the price!”** Require your bidder to provide an itemized breakdown for each room / surface that specifically shows what they are charging you for labor and materials. 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.

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.