

Before hiring an exterior painter, use this guide and ask these questions to assess their professionalism, safety practices, and the quality of their work.

Step One. Online Research:

Before you schedule an estimate

Oregon state law mandates that contractors must be licensed, bonded, and insured. Additionally, all employees must be on a workers compensation insurance policy if they are not named on the Oregon Construction Contractors Board (ORCCB) license as an owner. If you hire a contractor that is operating illegally you lose the ability to recover damages, and you lose the support of the ORCCB and their Dispute Resolution Service.

- Verify an active ORCCB License, Liability Insurance, and a Surety Bond at Oregon State Contractor License Search. Input the contractor's CCB # to see all the details. (Our CCB # is 164514)
- Verify an active Workers Compensation Insurance policy at Oregon DCBS Proof of Coverage Search.
- Look up their reviews by searching for company name + reviews. For example, for Pearl Painters you can simply go to Google and search "pearl painters reviews."

Step Two. Scope of Work:

Creating clear expectations

Having a clear, written version of your project is essential. Any professional painting company should work with you to create this scope of work. This allows you to communicate your expectations to potential contractors and get comparable bids. The scope should document the following:

- Rooms or surfaces you want to be painted.
- The level of preparation needed, including repairs.
- Desired finishes, application methods, number of coats, paint brand and type, sheen level, and colors.
- Special requests or details important to you.

Step Three. Ask Questions:

Avoid red flags

Now that you know the contractor is licensed, bonded, and insured, and you have a scope of work in hand, it's time to get into the more detailed questions that are listed to the right. It is absolutely worth it to spend the time needed to ask these questions. Any professional contractor should be confident in their answer to every single one.

- Don't be afraid to ask pointed questions.
- **If a contractor gets defensive or won't answer, don't hire them.** Move on to other bids.
- Trust your gut. This is someone you are allowing into your home and you need to be able to trust them.

Questions to Ask Exterior Painters

Surface Preparation Prep is essential for ensuring paint looks good and adheres properly so it lasts over time. Improper surface prep will lead to peeling, cracking, or poor coverage. Require your bidder to note in the contract that you will have an opportunity to inspect and approve the surface preparation before moving on to the painting stage!

- Do you pressure wash or hand wash? Will you use a cleaning agent?
- Will the cleaning products harm my plants/animals?
- How do you know if the surface is dry enough to paint?
- Will you use a moisture meter? What is a safe percentage range on the moisture meter?
- Will you scrape all loose paint, even on the high 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?

Protection Requirements A painting contractor's protection process is vital to safeguarding your property during a project and is a clear indicator of their professionalism.

- How do you prevent overspray, drips, and spills on my roof, fence, windows, brick, deck, car, etc.?
- What materials do you use for masking and taping windows, doors, and other areas?
- How do you protect landscaping, plants, and outdoor fixtures?
- Will you cover walkways, driveways, and patios during the painting process?
- Do you use drop cloths or plastic sheeting to protect surfaces near the work area?
- Will you remove/cover any outdoor furniture or other belongings, or should I do that before work begins?
- How do you handle cleanup in the event of accidental spills or overspray?

Paint Application Defining paint application details with the bidder ensures proper methods, coverage, and quality. Clear expectations help avoid surprises, additional costs, and ensure a professional finish.

- How will you apply the paint? Will you spray, spray & back brush, spray & back roll, or hand paint?
- How many coats will you apply?
- What's the difference between one heavy coat and two normal coats?
- What can go wrong if you apply a really thick coat of paint?
- How do you know you are applying the paint at the correct mil thickness?
- Please define what you consider 2 coats. Is that spraying in one direction and going back over it, or do you let the first coat dry and then apply the second coat?
- How will you paint my front door? Will you remove it or paint it in place?
- What brand, type of paint, and sheen level do you recommend?
- Will you use enamel on my front door?
- What happens if the paint does not cover in the specified number of coats? Will it cost more?
- What surfaces are included and excluded from the painting?

Cleanup Detailing the cleanup process with the painting contractor ensures waste is handled properly, your property is protected, and environmental standards are met, preventing potential damage or extra costs.

- What do you do with the garbage produced from my project? Do you take it away or put it in my garbage?
- What do you do with the leftover paint?
- Where do you clean your brushes, rollers, and spray equipment?
- What do you do with dirty solvent used to clean oil paint from brushes or sprayers?
- How do you manage and contain paint chips or debris during the prep process?
- Will you clean the area daily or only at the end of the project?
- What precautions do you take to prevent environmental contamination from paint waste or wash water?

Payments Clarifying the payment process with your painter ensures transparency, protects both parties, and helps prevent disputes or unexpected costs throughout the project.

- Do you require a deposit? If not, how do I know you are committed to doing my project before it rains?
- What is your payment schedule, and when are payments due throughout the project?
- Will you allow me to inspect the work at the end of the project before your crew leaves and correct all touch-ups before I pay the final balance? Will you put that in writing?

Comparing Cost Make sure you're not just focusing on the price: Require your bidder to provide an itemized number of labor hours required for each task. If there is a big variance in cost from one contractor to another there is likely something missing.

- Can I see your written prep and painting process for exterior projects like mine?
- How long will my project take? How many workers for how many days?
- Can you provide the total hours detail so I can understand how you got to your price?
- Will my cost change if it takes longer or requires more materials than you planned for? *(Get in writing!)*