



# Guide to Hiring a Remodeler

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT REMODELER... THE FIRST TIME

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**Questions? Need more info?**

**Call (208) 596-1181**

**[www.EalyConstruction.com](http://www.EalyConstruction.com)**





"We're here to provide guidance and remove as much ambiguity as possible during our projects."

Nathaniel Ealy  
Owner, Ealy Construction



## Have you been considering a remodel for your home?

Congrats! A remodel can be a valuable investment that adds a lot of functionality and style to your home. Unfortunately, too many homeowners end up working with unprofessional contractors who make the process a lot harder than it needs to be.

We've all heard the horror stories: surprise bills that bring you massively over budget at the end of the project, remodels that take months longer than expected, or sub-par finishes on the completed remodel. And all of that is after finding a contractor that even picks up the phone to talk with you.

### Homeowners on the Palouse need contractors that treat them better.

We want to help homeowners in our area find honest, reliable contractors for their home remodeling projects. That's why we created this guide to hiring a remodeler.

When you're making the decision on who to trust with your home, make sure that the contractor you hire meets these standards and has a proven track record for success. If you do, you're likely to find someone you can trust to make your dream remodel a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Ealy'.

Nathaniel Ealy  
Owner, Ealy Construction





# What To Look For

## Proof of Establishment

**Why it's important:** You may have heard stories about a "Chuck in a truck" contractor before - A do it all handyman that can promise bargain basement costs and ends up creating more problems than he solves.

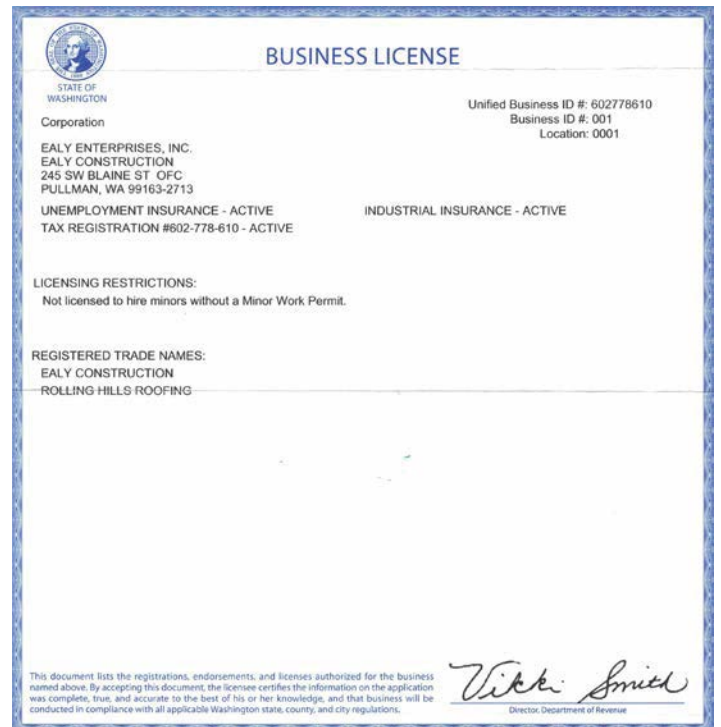
When you're deciding who to work with, make sure that the contractor you hire is established and has a proven track record of excellent work.



## Business Licenses

**Why It's Important:** Make sure your contractor has a valid and current Idaho / Washington business license.

Some contractors will change their company name to run away from past lawsuits or customer complaints. Making sure they've been in business under the same name for many years can show that they aren't new to remodeling and have the experience required to create a quality outcome for you.



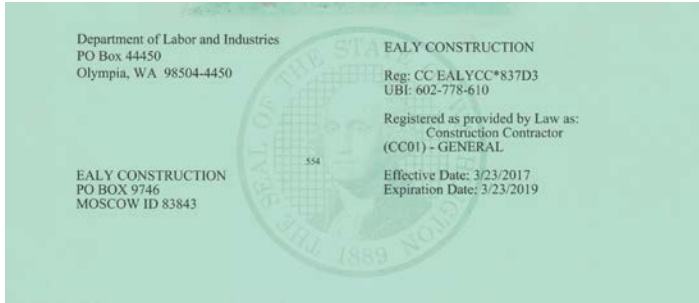


# What To Look For

## Proper Insurance

**Why It's Important:** If your contractor isn't licensed and insured, you can end up footing the bill for any accidents or injuries that occur on your property. Your contractor should hold at least 1 million in coverage and should be financially stable enough to work through your project without having to chase down payments from other jobs to finish paying for yours.

Your contractor should be able to protect you against losses, and having proper workers comp is a part of that. Ealy Construction carries \$2 million dollars of general liability coverage and all of our employees are covered under proper insurance and workers comp.



## Accolades and Awards

**Why It's Important:** If your contractor is well established and does high quality work, chances are they've been featured in a construction magazine or have received accolades for their work. Make sure that your contractor is producing quality work and has the awards to prove it.



# What To Look For

## Comparing Pricing Models

**Why It's Important:** Different contractors will price out their work in different ways. **If you're comparing bids and one is massively lower than another, be wary of the lower bid.** Often contractors will price out their jobs as a "Time & Materials" bid. These bids are based on a fixed rate for the time the project takes, plus the cost of materials and a markup.

The problem with this kind of proposal is that your contractor has no incentive to work efficiently or build additional value into your project. In fact, they are incentivized to quote a low number to win the job, then blow their unrealistic budget later. Several of our clients worked with us after their previous contractor went massively over budget and surprised them with large balances at the end of the project. Because these are based on time spent, unexpected issues or falling behind schedule can quickly blow your budget.

A less common type of bid in our area is "Cost Plus", where the builder charges the actual cost of the project plus a flat fee on top. This model pins the contractor's fee down, but doesn't necessarily provide homeowners with any more certainty on final cost than a time & materials approach.

Both of these models can work well with thorough planning before the project starts. **However, most contractors use these models because it allows them to skip large amounts of planning** and "keep the meter running" during the project.

The approach that requires advance planning and provides the most certainty to homeowners is the "Fixed Bid" model. Having struggled with the pitfalls of the other models for years, Ealy Construction decided to move almost exclusively to Fixed Bid. This model takes more work up-front. However, it eliminates the classic, "Here's your final invoice for \$\$\$\$\$ more than expected."

With fixed bid pricing, we do a massive amount of preparation up front to ensure that even the smallest details of your project are planned for, then give you **a single fixed price for the completed work**. As long as the scope of work stays the same throughout the project, you'll never pay more than that fixed price.

**We use Fixed Bid because it removes a lot of the ambiguities and lets us promise a fully defined project for a fully defined price.**

| COMPARING FEE STRUCTURES                | FIXED BID<br>+ PRECONSTRUCTION | TIME &<br>MATERIALS | COST PLUS |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Defined scope of work                   | ✓                              | ✓                   | ✓         |
| Fully detailed materials selections     | ✓                              | X                   | X         |
| Know the final price before starting    | ✓                              | X                   | X         |
| Protection from cost overruns           | ✓                              | X                   | X         |
| Design process included in project cost | ✓                              | X                   | X         |





# What To Look For

## Employee Conduct

**Why It's Important:** Your contractor's employees should not only be experienced professionals, they should be polite and friendly as well.

When you're considering a remodel, it's important to consider that the people you hire will be entering your home for days or even months until the project is completed. Make sure that you're comfortable with the people that you allow into your home.

“Take time to do your due diligence, research the company, and make sure you feel comfortable working with them.”

## Positive Attitude

**Why It's Important:** Your contractor's attitude can be the difference between a great and a lousy experience. It often goes without saying, it's much more enjoyable to work with someone that is professional and keeps a positive attitude.

If you don't "click" after the initial meetings, it's best to find someone else. Life is too short to invite bad chemistry into your home.

## No High Pressure Sales

**Why It's Important:** Many contractors will use high pressure sales tactics to get you to commit to working with them.

“When you're considering a remodel, it's important to consider that the people you hire will be entering your home for days or even months until the project is completed.”

Your contractor should never tell you that you don't have time to consider your options before committing.

A remodel or construction project for your home is a big commitment and often a large investment. Take time to do your due diligence, research the company, and make sure you feel comfortable working with them.

## Detailed Proposals and Change Orders

**Why It's Important:** When an unexpected surprise comes up, your contractor should have a process in place for change orders.

A change order is an agreement between you and your contractor for any additional work outside of the scope of the initial project.

Quality construction companies will stop the work, show you the issue, propose exactly what needs to be fixed, and don't start work again until the agreement is signed and reviewed by you. Make sure they have a policy in place for change orders and will handle any issues promptly and respectfully.

# What To Look For

## Home Protection

**Why It's Important:** Will your contractor take steps to protect your home during the remodel process? A remodel can kick up a lot of dust, make a lot of noise, and can be disruptive to your home life. Your contractor should be considerate of you and your lifestyle, and should install dust protection and painting dropcloths when required.

Depending on the scope of your project, home protections can include partitioning off the work area with plastic, covering fixtures with paper or tape, or covering up heat and air vents to protect your furnace. Daily clean-up and even fresh air ventilation systems may be required in some cases.

Make sure your contractor is familiar with these processes so that you can be comfortable in your home during the remodel.





# Customer References



*"Our experience with Nathaniel as our G.C. runs contrary to every story you hear about home construction and contractors.*

*He's hardworking, trustworthy, communicative, and very open about every step of the process. Through it all you can tell he loves what he does and that he cares about the project - in this case our custom home. We might well be a contractor's nightmare: very curious, very involved, and very particular.*

*Nathaniel has done an unbelievable amount of work researching and pricing - from the special wrap to accommodate the exterior foam insulation to the ventilation needs of a tight house to the most beautiful windows in the world.*

*His aesthetic can be relied on, and he will tell you if there's a better way to do something. His crew is polite and hardworking. The subs he works with are top notch. When we visit the site it is well maintained and professional, very much built with care. Building our home has been a joy."*

**Cathlin Sentz**



*"Nathaniel came to our home promptly when we first called. He was very professional, helpful and kind. He understood our desires—two additions and some remodeling.*

*He brought in an architect who was able to design just what we had in mind. He had a contract very soon and it was quite reasonable. He was able to work within our time frame. Ealy construction has a great team, rather than using various subs.*

*All were very professional, skilled, clean, and respectful of our home and our life in the construction zone. Glitches were minor and readily fixed with no additional costs to us. The completed project is super. Top quality and workmanship.*

*We are thrilled and happy to recommend Ealy Construction most heartily. Nathaniel has contacted us several times and come by twice to be sure all is well. He is super; you will be delighted."*

**Dwight Brown**



# Customer References



*"I feel like you know the person by being inside somebody's home, and we wanted it to feel like... when you walked inside our home it felt like "us". We always wanted it to feel like it had our personal touch. It's the lighting, it's the flooring, it's all the textures and details that you wouldn't think you would need to pick out, but they all come together into a beautiful home.*

*We absolutely loved working with Nathaniel and Ealy Construction, really all of their crew that ended up coming in either for a day or for the long haul. We really did develop an excellent working relationship with all of them. We knew that we could come to them with concerns, even if it felt like it was untimely.*

*We can't complain whatsoever with how things turned out. It's beautiful, it's everything we wanted it to be, and we love it."*

**Jake and Danielle Adams**

***"It's everything we wanted it to be,  
and we love it."***



*"We decided it was time to upgrade and update, and that was when we contacted Nathaniel and Ealy Construction.*

*We wanted to keep the space we had but maybe use it more wisely. He came in and we told him what we wanted - a soaking tub and a large shower, we wanted light colors, a bathroom that was easy to clean and keep up. I think we got the best of all worlds.*

*He came in and did a perfect design for us. And we've got tile all the way to the ceiling so you can clean the whole bathroom in 5 or 10 minutes, so it's worked out to be exactly what we wanted.*

*They were all really good , all really polite, and cleaned up after themselves every day and so that was really nice. They were very considerate that they were working a construction site that was also in someone's home. I wish we had done it sooner."*

**Hank and Linda Robison**





# Customer References



*"Nethaniel and his crew did an incredible job with our Taphouse, from the early stages of demo to rebuilding exactly the way we wanted. He was punctual and communicative, and found many ways to accomplish our job that saved us money. He also has a great aesthetic eye and we relied on his opinion heavily for many of the details that make our place look so polished. Highly recommend!"*

**Joel Cohen**



*"Every member of the Ealy Construction team, beginning with owner Nethaniel, provided us with top-quality, professional and on-budget work. We love our kitchen and bathroom upgrades, and appreciated the team's attention to detail and quality in every phase. Our satisfaction really mattered to Ealy Construction, and we're delighted with their work. Highest recommendation."*

**Sydney Rozen**

*"Nethaniel is unusual for a contractor on several levels. First of all he is a very good consultant on what is best structurally as well as aesthetically. He and his workers are a delight to have in and around the house. Most important I always trust him to be honest and to operate with integrity in all my dealings with him."*



*"We have had Ealy Enterprises roof our house, finish the porch, structurally fix a sagging garage roof, paint internally and externally and perform various internal and external renovations. I highly recommend them."*

**"rolps"**

*"I hired Nethaniel's company to build a deck in the front of my house and add a door to my garage. The deck turned out beautifully."*



*"All of his workers are very professional and personable. They are on time and once your job is started they all stick with it to completion. I am extremely happy with the quality of the work. After all was done, Nethaniel stopped by to make sure all the work was up to the quality that he expected."*

*"I highly recommend Ealy... prices are fair and the work is excellent."*

**judyinidaho**

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Q. Are there any other red flags or things I should look out for?

Keep an eye out for:

- Lack of references or positive testimonials
- Can't show previous jobs that were built to the standard that you're expecting
- Online reviews that don't have a response or show that they would be hard to work with
- Unwillingness to talk with you or give you any information
- They're able to start your job immediately without any planning or wait time up front.
- They can't talk about how they've handled problems in the past
- If they don't have any questions for you
- Unprofessional appearance or attitude

**"Because our contracts are fixed-price, we give you one all-inclusive price for your job."**

## Q. My last contractor gave me a low estimate and then sprung a bunch of hidden fees on me when the job was half finished. Am I going to have to deal with surprises down the line?

Never. Because our contracts are fixed-price, we give you one all-inclusive price for your job. If any major surprises come up, we stop work and communicate with you immediately with plans to correct the issue. We then request signed permission to proceed.

We promise never to hit you with unexpected charges at the end of a project. We will never do any work on your home that you do not sign off on.

If the project ends up costing more than our contract states, we pay for the overage ourselves.

## Q. What if costs change in between receiving a quote and starting the project?

In our industry the cost of material goes up every year. Because we quote with a fixed bid for the entire project, you're protected from the risk of surprise charges. All of our quotes have a date range they are valid for to remove as much uncertainty as possible. If pre-construction designing and the signing of a construction agreement falls out of this range, we may need to review job costs before proceeding.

## Q. When should I start planning my project?

Most remodels benefit from 90 days of planning in advance of the work. We've found that this gives enough time for thorough planning and for clients to be fully informed and have confidence that they're getting what they wanted.

**"If the project ends up costing more than our contract states, we pay for the overage ourselves."**

## Q: Do I need construction plans, or to hire an architect?

We are a design & build remodeler, which means that we manage both the design process and the remodeling process in house. Our preconstruction services will include planning and design for your space, as well as creating construction plans and blueprints. Plans also include materials selections, a detailed project scope, and a schedule for the remodeling process.

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**If you don't see an answer to your question here, give us a call and we will be happy to talk with you.**





# Proven Remodeling Process

Contractors that have been in business for long enough know that creating a system for their projects results in better outcomes for homeowners. Make sure that your contractor has a solid plan in place and won't be "winging it" as they go along.

At Ealy Construction, we've created the following process for our customers to ensure an excellent remodel experience and a beautiful final product.

## STEP 1. Give us a call.

A quick, no pressure call about your ideas gets the ball rolling. If you have features you'd like to include or a budget you're working within, let us know and we will work with you to meet your needs.

**"We'll ask questions, listen a lot, and get to know each other."**

During this call we'll walk you through our process and see if we would be a good fit for working with each other. If we are, we'll schedule a time to visit you and walk through your space together.

## STEP 2. We visit you and prepare a proposal.

We'll visit your home and see the space you would like to remodel. A typical meeting takes less than an hour. We'll ask questions, listen a lot, and get to know each other.

We'll talk with you about how you use the space, what features you would like to include, establish the full scope of the remodel, and determine how it will tie into the existing house. If any special accommodations are required for children, pets, hours of work, or access to the home, we talk with you about it and make sure we can accommodate.

7 to 10 business days after our meeting, we provide you with a proposal to establish a rough price estimate for the project. Our proposal is all inclusive - everything is covered from the cost of materials and labor to taxes and cleanup. We don't gloss over any expenses that will impact your wallet. We've found that this creates a much more straightforward and stress free experience for our customers.

After our meeting we answer any questions you may have via email and phone until you feel comfortable moving forward.

## STEP 3. We design your space.

When you're happy with our proposal and ready to move forward, we start the pre-construction process. Our designer will create 3D renderings and plans for a beautiful space to fit your needs and budget. We will cost out everything that is required in the project from start to finish so you know exactly what you are getting and how much it will cost.

### Before we ever start work, you will know:

- Exactly what you're getting and exactly what you'll pay to get it done.
- Every single material selection (We mean everything, down to the color and style of toilet paper holder).
- How long the project will take.
- An exact scope for the job: a written description of everything that is included in the project.

There is no obligation to use us for construction or to move forward at this point. If you need to put the project on hold or decide to work with another contractor, we are happy to provide the completed designs to you for a fee.

**"Before we ever start work, you will know exactly what you're getting and exactly what you'll pay to get it done."**



# Proven Remodeling Process

## STEP 4. We review the details together.

We review the details of the project from top to bottom and put them in writing. Clarity is kindness, so we make our agreements straightforward and transparent.

With everything down in writing, we draft and sign a construction agreement.

At the time the agreement is signed, we request a down payment to allow us to schedule your job and order materials required for it. The dollar amount of a down payment depends on the project, it is typically between 10% and 33% of the job depending on the project size.

before we start work. However, remodels can uncover unexpected surprises, so we have a process in place for anything that comes up.

If we discover an unexpected issue during a remodel, we stop work and put together a change order. This is a document that outlines the issue and outlines several options for how to correct it, along with impacts to cost and overall schedule.

We will never complete any work on your home that you do not personally sign off on. We'll remove as much uncertainty as possible with forward planning and provide you with clear guidance if anything unexpected comes up.

“Clarity is kindness, so we make our agreements straightforward and transparent.”

“Our team tidies the site daily and does a deep clean every Friday so you don't have to be embarrassed to show your friends the project over the weekend.”

## STEP 5. We build your dream remodel.

Our cheerful team shows up at your home and sets up in the remodel area. We are very careful to protect your home as we do so. This includes setting up dust protection in various forms and staging tools and materials to allow your life to proceed as normally and safely as possible during the remodel.

Our team tidies the site daily and does a deep clean every Friday so you don't have to be embarrassed to show your friends the project over the weekend.

We answer our phone or return your call within 1 business day before, during, and after projects. We give you proactive progress updates every week we're working on your project.

Our process tries to identify as many potential issues as possible before construction, so you will be well informed

## STEP 6. Final job walk through & follow up.

We walk through the completed space and make sure everything is completed to your 100% satisfaction.

If you want to throw a party to show off your new space, or just to feed us, this would be the time.

If anything comes up after we've completed the job, give us a call and we'll make things right. You can enjoy your newly remodeled space with peace of mind knowing you and your home will be cared for.

| COMPARE YOUR OPTIONS               |  | CONTRACTOR<br>A | CONTRACTOR<br>B |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| Proof Of Establishment             | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Business Licenses                  | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Proper Insurance                   | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Accolades and Awards               | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Fixed Bid Pricing                  | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Employee Conduct                   | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Professionalism                    | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Workmanship Warranty               | ✓  |                 |                 |
| No High Pressure Sales             | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Detailed Proposals & Change Orders | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Home Protection                    | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Customer References                | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Frequently Asked Questions         | ✓  |                 |                 |
| Proven Remodeling Process          | ✓  |                 |                 |



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