

Seven Things You Must Know Before Hiring a Plumber

Introduction

Have you ever had a toilet break in the middle of the night? Or maybe a pipe froze this last winter and burst, causing part of your house to flood.

No matter what kind of plumbing issues you've experienced- I'm guessing that they weren't fun. Whether it was a minor inconvenience or caused extensive damage, plumbing issues can be a huge pain to take care of!

It doesn't help that you probably feel rushed while trying to pick a plumber to fix the problem. I mean, when your laundry room is flooding, you don't exactly have a ton of time to find a good plumber. You need to find one ASAP so you can get back to dealing with everything else going on in your life!

That's why this short report was written.

After you're done reading these next few chapters, you'll know more about how to pick a plumber than 99% of the population. You can rest assured that you'll not only get a qualified plumber, but also one that fits all of your specific needs.

That said, the first question to address is the age-old question of "should I pay someone to do it or just do it myself?"

Should I Hire a Plumber or Try to Do it Myself?

This is kind of a loaded question, as there is a lot to think about:

- Have you fixed this type of problem before?
- Do you have an experienced person who can help you?
- Is this an emergency?
- Do you have the time to learn how, then the time to actually do it?
- How tight is your budget right now?
- If done incorrectly, what are the consequences?
- Is this something you *want* to do, or just don't want to pay for?

Most people, when they're honest with themselves, don't really have the time to put into a plumbing project. By the time they figure out how to do it and then actually put in the work, it has taken up hours and hours of precious time.

Likewise, some things, if done incorrectly, can do a huge amount of damage to your home. Leaks or drips can cause mold, which is ugly, a safety hazard and a pain to get rid of.

That's why hiring a plumber is recommended for most plumbing projects.

If you're just trying to unclog a toilet with a plunger because too much toilet paper went down- don't worry about calling a plumber. You should at least try to do it yourself because it's very simple and doesn't take a ton of time.

But if your toilet got clogged because your child put a few dozen toys down there- a plunger may not do the job!

So use discretion, but generally it's better to hire a plumber than attempt to do it yourself. You *will* have to make a financial investment, but in the end you'll be happy that you did.

We've had dozens, probably hundreds of clients come to us after we finished and say "you know, I should've called you sooner instead of trying to do it myself!"

Plus, there's a reason why among plumbers, we tend to say that we repair what husbands "fixed"!

How Can I Be Sure to Hire the Right Plumber for My Needs?

Some people make the mistake of just hiring the first plumber they come across. Either that, or they get a few quotes and just go with the cheapest.

Don't do that.

You want a plumber who meets all of your needs. That includes

- Meeting your budget
- Understanding your problem
- Being professional
- Having a customer-first mindset
- Availability
- Experience

Doesn't that sound like someone you'd like to hire? Or would you rather go with the guy down the street who started his plumbing company just because he'd "unclogged a few toilets before."

When you're looking into potential plumbers, here are the best 3 places to look:

1. The Internet
2. Friends and family (referrals)
3. Phone books

The Internet has more information than you can ever *think* of reading available at your fingertips. It's pretty easy to find a few local plumbers with sites like Craigslist, Angie's List or even Google. The Internet is also great because it lets you view ratings and comments from previous customers.

Friends and family are also great, as they can usually recommend a good plumber. Almost every homeowner has called out a plumber once or twice, so you should be able to get a few recommendations.

Finally, the phone book (antiquated as it is) still works just fine. Just keep in mind that you won't be able to find out much about the company until you give them a call. The other 2 options allow you to get more information before you start talking to the plumber.

When you start calling these plumbers, consider the points mentioned earlier. Is the plumber available to help you in the next few days? Do they sound like they know what they're talking about? How long have they been in business? Are they polite?

We'll go over a few more questions later, but those are the types of questions you'll need to ask.

How Do I Verify that I'm Dealing with a Qualified Plumber?

When you hire someone to come into your home, you want to make sure they know what they're doing. That goes for everything, from plumbing to laying down new carpet.

There are 5 main things to look for in a qualified plumber. If the plumber is missing one of these, you may want to look into someone else.

State License

Each state licenses qualified plumbers. Just like your driver's license, each plumber will have their own unique license number. If your plumber isn't licensed, then they probably aren't legally allowed to do plumbing work in your state!

Insurance

It'd be great if everything always went according to plan, right? The problem is... bad stuff happens!

You want to make sure that your plumber is properly insured. If they accidentally break something, hurt themselves or cause more damage, their insurance should cover the costs.

Maintenance Plan

Experienced plumbers know that having a good relationship with customers is important. It builds trust on both sides and always makes for a more pleasant experience.

A great way to help build trust is a plumbing maintenance plan. This essentially means that when certain repairs come up, the plumber will offer discounts to members of the plan. Likewise, homeowners will probably pay a small annual fee to join the plan.

This benefits both sides- the plumber makes money upfront and has a loyal customer. The customer no longer has to worry about which plumber to use or availability, as they'll be a top priority.

Guarantees

When you shell out money for something, you expect results. If you don't get what you pay for then you should get your money back, right?

Or at least, you should have more work done on it for no charge to make it work as it should.

Top quality plumbers will put a money back guarantee on their work. If something breaks or just doesn't work as it should, they'll return your money.

This is important because it gives the plumber an extra incentive to do a good job the first time! They know that if they do something incorrectly, they'll probably have to give you a refund *and* lose a customer.

24/7 Services

Let's face it- things don't break when life is easy. Your toilet clogs at two in the afternoon while you're at work, or pipes freeze up and burst at four in the morning.

Your plumber should always be available- day or night. They should realize that this is a 24/7 business and do everything they can to accommodate you.

Does that mean they'll be able to show up at your door in 10 minutes? Not necessarily, as they may be busy at that time. But you can still give them a call, whether it's 2pm or 2am, and expect to talk to someone.

What Type of Plumber or Plumbing Company Should I Use?

Generally there are only two types of plumbers- new construction plumbers and maintenance plumbers. Both types of plumbers can be broken down even further, into residential and commercial.

As you might expect, you want a residential maintenance plumber.

But there's more to it than that, right? You're *really* asking if you should work with a large company or a smaller operation, correct?

Well there are a few strengths and weaknesses with each.

Large Company Pros and Cons

Larger plumbing companies have a lot to offer. They'll have dozens of technicians, possibly a few receptionists, and many different services.

Most plumbers working for these larger companies will be completely squared away. They'll have experience, proper licenses, and a large insurance policy to back them up.

They'll always be willing to take on more work, although (depending on the season) you may have to wait a while. Even though they have large teams, they also get a lot of business.

The main problem with these companies is that you may not feel like the service was very personalized. You're just one of many customers, so it's more difficult for the company to keep up with you on a regular basis and really build a relationship.

Another thing is that if you want to negotiate on price, a larger company is probably less willing to budge. They have standard prices for most projects, and getting them to take less than the standard isn't easy.

Small Company Pros and Cons

Smaller companies may be as small as one or two plumbers! These operations may or may not have a receptionist, formal office or warehouse.

These companies are generally more personal than larger companies. Because each and every customer is important, they usually treat everyone with a lot of respect. They want to keep your business, and being professional is the best way to do that.

As part of being personable, they're also more willing to negotiate than some larger companies. They make their own rules, so they can lower their prices to help meet your needs.

The primary downside is that some of these companies may have unlicensed or uninsured plumbers. They may know what they're doing, but if they aren't licensed or insured then move on to someone else.

Another negative point regarding these smaller companies is that they aren't able to handle large workloads. They might try to do so by subcontracting out the work, but others will just ask you to wait a few days until they have time to help you out.

How Expensive Will My Job Be? What are the Costs?

It isn't easy to explain how expensive your job will be. It all depends on how extensive it is, what kinds of materials or equipment are required, where you live, etc.

Generally, you have 3 main costs to pay when you hire a plumber:

- Direct labor
- Materials
- Overhead

The direct labor is the no-kidding, hands-on labor that the plumber performs on your house. This can take anywhere from 5 minutes to a few hours, depending on what you're having them work on.

Keep in mind that even if your job only takes 5 minutes, you will probably get a bill. The plumber had to travel to your home, prepare for the job and perform the specialized labor. Wouldn't you still want to get paid if you did those things for someone?

Material can be either very expensive or negligible, depending on the job. Copper isn't cheap, so if you're having the plumber replace piping, materials are going to be a hefty chunk of your overall price.

Meanwhile, just having a faucet or tub unclogged probably won't require any materials at all.

Finally, overhead is everything that you don't see. Paperwork, insurance, travel, equipment and office personnel (accountants, receptionists and managers) are a few examples. Even 1-man shows have some overhead!

Why is It So Expensive?

Unfortunately, most people are surprised at how much hiring a plumber costs. As mentioned earlier, there are multiple costs that go into a plumber's estimate. Even though it'd be nice to think that direct labor and materials were the only things required, overhead places a major factor in any company's costs.

If the initial estimate seems too high, ask the plumber if they can come down ten or twenty percent. They may (or may not) be willing to budge, but it doesn't hurt to try.

Just remember that they're trying to make a living, just like you're trying to get the most "bang for your buck."

Are There Any Dangers or Risks that I Should be Aware of?

A major reason why you're hiring a licensed plumber is to reduce your risks, right?

But even though your risks are lower, there are still things that can go wrong.

Here are a few things that can happen:

- The plumber gets hurt
- Plumbing isn't tightened enough and a leak occurs
- Dirt/residue gets into the pipes
- A clog (such as a toilet) isn't immediately fixed and overflows

Some of these, like the first two, can be major issues. But that's why the plumber has insurance and a money-back guarantee. If a major issue occurs- and it's the plumber's fault- they should take care of it. Period.

The second two are minor issues. The residue will come out as soon as you run the water, and if something gets spilled onto the floor, it can just be mopped up.

So there *are* a few risks and dangers that can occur. But the likelihood is pretty small, and even the major ones should be covered by the plumber's insurance.

If that doesn't seem acceptable, think about the alternative. What would happen if you tried to do everything yourself? First, you spend a lot of time just learning how to do something. YouTube is great, but it's not exactly the same as going to a trade school for plumbing.

Then you spend money getting the equipment and tools you need.

Finally, you spend a bunch of time trying to do the repair yourself. If it works, great... but if it doesn't, then what? Or what if you make the problem worse, damage something, or even injure yourself?

Then you have new problems to deal with.

Instead, it's MUCH safer and easier to just hire a plumber. It's not cheap, but it's cheaper and safer than the risks of doing it all yourself.

Checklist of Questions to Ask a Plumber Before You Hire Them

By no means is this a complete list of questions to ask a plumber before you hire them. Instead, it's more of a starting point to help you think of questions.

That said, here are 20 to help get you started:

1. Are you licensed in this state?
2. How long have you been licensed here?
3. Do you have workman's comp insurance?
4. Do you have a written money back guarantee?
5. Do you have written warranty?
6. Does this project require any kind of permit?
7. Do you have different options available for materials I can choose from?
8. How much will this cost?
9. Can I get a written estimate/quote?
10. How long have you been a plumber?
11. Does this have to be replaced, or can it be repaired?
12. When would you be able to fix this?
13. Do you have any references I can talk to?
14. What makes you different from the other plumbers in the area?
15. Do you offer a maintenance service plan?

If you can think of a few more, go ahead and ask! Again, this is just to help get you started.

Conclusion

Dealing with stuff around the house isn't fun. Whether it's adding a section onto the house, installing a bathroom in the basement or just fixing something, you probably won't have much fun with it.

The good news is that you can relieve a lot of your stress simply by hiring a qualified plumber to come do the work for you. You'll have less to worry about, the work will get done correctly, and you can move onto more important things.

Just remember to do your due diligence and homework before you hire a plumber. You don't want to hire the first person to come around, but don't expect a miracle either! Plumbers have to make a living, and certain times of the year find most plumbers extremely busy, so they may not be able to come right away.