



A guide to getting any work done by a company or tradesperson

To minimise the risk of something going wrong, here are a few tips –

- Get the final agreement documented. It doesn't have to be a formal contract. An email, text, messenger or even a WhatsApp message works.
- Be clear what the scope of work and price is. What is included, what is not included (from both sides). Timescales, duration, quality, materials, specifications, payment schedule etc. It doesn't take long to write down what's agreed. Be clear what you're getting, when you're getting it and how much it is going to cost.
- Ensure you've included any 'ifs and buts'. By that we mean sometimes if there are any unknowns, be clear to know what they are, understand what the cost, quality and time implications are, who is responsible for it, and get the agreement written down! Ask them what could go wrong, who is responsible and will cover the costs? It's all about managing risk and contingencies.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. You may think you won't understand the answer, or you'll feel silly, but most answers can be explained without the use of technical jargon. Most trades will happily answer any questions and even give an analogy or another way of explaining something if needed.
- Have you heard of the time, cost, quality triangle? Sometimes getting work done around the house is a balance. If you focus on cutting costs, then you may get it done quicker, but almost certainly compromise quality. If you focus on wanting good quality work, then it may cost more and take longer. If you want it done quickly then again, it could compromise on quality. Be clear what your priorities are and what you're prepared to forego on.
- If something is not going right, or you can spot something is going to go wrong (in advance), then flag it up ASAP. Don't wait for it to go wrong as sometimes it's harder to fix something that has gone totally wrong. Prevention is better than cure
- Make sure that you have done your appropriate homework and research; do you need any testimonials or references? Reputable companies will not hesitate to provide you what you want. Do they have the right insurance (e.g. professional indemnity and public liability) and can provide you a copy of valid certificates? Do you need to see any proof of ID? There's nothing wrong with asking someone to prove who they say they are. The bank asks you to prove who you are. It's called good governance and due diligence.
- Can you see some of the work they have done? A lot of trades now take photos and they may tell you some local jobs that you could see yourself.
- Shop around and get a second or third opinion. Again, you may not need to get 3 quotes in to get a roof tile replaced, but if someone tells you there's a major problem with your wall, you might want to get a second opinion on what's wrong, what needs doing, as well as the price. As said earlier, you need to be confident you understand what you're being told. If you're not, and still don't get it as you're out of your comfort zone, that's ok, but is there a friend, neighbour or a relative you can ask?

We appreciate the above may be overkill if you need someone to fix a broken flag on your drive, but if you're looking for an extension or anything in between then you may want something appropriate and proportionate to the type and complexity of the work needed.