

# Everything You *MUST* *Know* Before Hiring a Handyman



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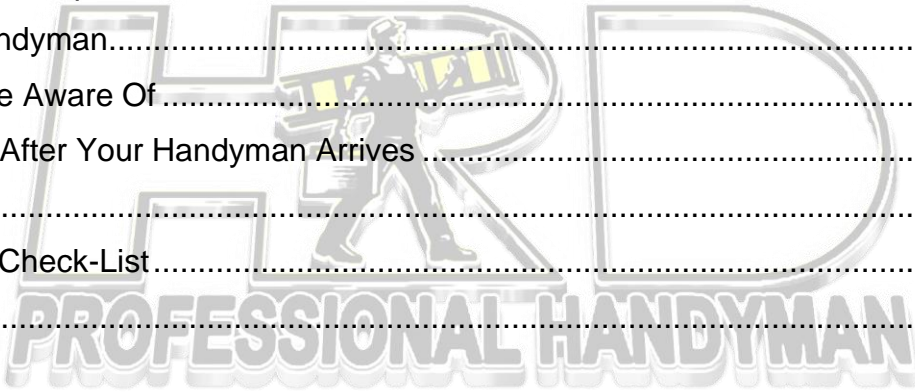
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# Introduction

The term 'handyman' has changed over time. Most people think of a handyman as someone who has enough skills and knowledge to fix a variety of things around the house. This is still true today, except that many skilled contractors have chosen to become specialists. Most handymen operating today are 'small job professionals', although their skill sets and experience can vary widely. In general handymen can work in the fields of: general contracting, drywall, construction, demolition, electrical work, plumbing, tile work, painting, carpentry, yard work and a host of other skills. In the end, you hire handyman to fix the things around the house that you neither have the time or the skills to fix yourself. A great handyman can be a great tool to have!

Not all handymen are men either. Today's range of handymen professionals come from varied backgrounds and educations. There are many handywomen in the industry as well. For the process of this report the term 'handyman' will be used to refer to anyone who performs these types of services, whether they are male or female.

Hiring a good handyman can greatly improve your life. It can make getting small repairs and medium sized renovation projects done must easier. They are also good for creating a sense of confidence around the house. If something goes wrong, it is always helpful to have someone you can trust on speed dial ready to go. A good handyman is like having a good friend- they create a sense of confidence and are always ready to help out in times of need. Because of this, most people will hold on to a reliable and trust-worthy handyman once they find one. The trick is to find a handyman who is truly reliable, skilled and trustworthy in the first place. This report will help you locate, interview and hire the right handyman for the job.

## Services Provided

A handyman may possess a range of skills. These skills will likely differ according to their training, their interests and their business. Some handymen are competent at electrical repairs, caulking, tile work, plumbing, locksmithing, painting, demolition, carpentry and more. Some are versed in only a couple of these skills, while a few could be considered a 'Jack of All Trades'. It really depends on the individual handyman.

The scope of projects they are willing to take on will also differ among individual handymen. Some professional handymen may be willing to take on large scale projects that involve many trades. Others are small job guys- they take on multiple or single small repairs. Sometimes a handyman will only accept the large-scale projects. In tough times professional handymen often take up smaller jobs in order to maintain their customer base or to gain referrals. It is really hard to define a handyman in a traditional sense, because so many of them offer different services. Some handymen are better at certain skills and lacking in other skills. This means that you will have to ask a lot of questions and perform a little research on your intended handyman before you hire them.

Basically, a handyman provides a service based on the needs of the consumer. They tend to know how to repair, fix and re-build things around the house. Very few handymen are capable of fixing everything. In order to hire the right person for the job you as the homeowner has to know what it is that needs to be done.

### **Before You Begin Searching for a Handyman**

In order to find the right person for the job you have to know what types of skills and service you will require. This means making an organized list of all of the work that needs to be done on your home. The list could be a collection of simple fixes, such as a leaky faucet, a faulty electrical switch, a loose door hinge, a broken door or just about anything else. It could also be a single large project, like adding a small addition or building a porch. It might also be a combination of these things. The list can also include things that are fine now, but may get worse as time passes. Odds are that you will begin to experience more problems with your home down the road, so you might be looking for the handyman who can do it all now.

This organized list should contain everything you currently need done. This will give you something to reference when you speak with potential handymen. It is also a good idea to prioritize this organized list. You may want to figure out in advance how many of these repairs or projects you can afford at any given time and prioritize them as such. Getting

everything you need fixed at the same time may be too expensive, so you may have to break it down into phases.

## **Why Not Fix It Yourself?**

In truth, there is no reason why you cannot perform small or large repairs on your own home. If you happen to be a handy person then it is just a matter of gathering your tools, locating the appropriate materials and getting to work. If you really know what you are doing then you should have no problems. However, most of us are not particularly handy, or we are handy in only one specific area. You may be great at painting but have no idea how to re-wire that electrical outlet. Learning how to fix every problem in your home may save you money, but then again it may cost you money in the long run. Learning also takes time and effort, both of which you may not have.

The potential downside to doing your own home repairs comes in the form of mistakes and improper materials. If these problems do occur- then it is on you to fix it. The benefit of hiring a professional handyman is that these people are professionals, with highly developed skills and practical knowledge. They should be able to get the job done right the first time, and if they don't, they should know how to quickly fix the damage.

If you know what you are doing then you can fix it yourself. Handymen are in business because most people don't know how to fix it themselves, or worse, they think they do know. A handyman is a person you pay because they possess skills that you do not have. You also hire them because they have the time and the effort to expend to get your home projects done right!

# Individual Handymen Versus Handyman Companies

Times have changed the concept of the classic handyman. Today you can hire an individual handyman or choose to use a handyman company. Both have advantages and disadvantages. Here is what you need to know about both:

## The Individual Handyman

If you can locate a reliable and highly skilled individual handyman then you will gain their largest advantage- the ability to charge an hourly rate. These rates can be very flexible and fair. Also, the independent handyman is not hampered by company-specific rules. This may allow them to offer additional services and advice or to put in additional time. The individual handyman will also be more concerned with his reputation in comparison to a contractor who works for a company.

## The Handyman Company

Handyman companies have their own set of advantages. These larger companies can help you save time because they are designed to be efficient. Handyman companies also usually have strict hiring standards, which will make it easier for you to check up on references and license/insurance information. Using a company makes it easier to be sure of the experience levels of the employees- some of these companies require a minimum of 5 years of experience! Many handyman companies have guarantees and warranties when it comes to labor and materials. Reporting a problem to a company may be easier than fixing a problem with an individual- but again, that depends on the individual.

Deciding whether to hire an individual handyman or to go with a handyman company will be up to you. You will have to review all of the factors, including the project scope, time requirements, pricing options and more to decide which option will work for your situation. Both individual handymen and handymen companies can get the job done right, so your decision should come down to your research and your judgment.



# Locating a Handyman

The very first step in hiring a handyman is to create a list of potential candidates. A handyman is a very personal choice. They have to have the skills required to get the jobs you need done, but they also have to be trustworthy. After all, these people will be coming in and out of your house and will be around your family members. You also want someone who is competent and proficient, because you will be paying them. Locating the right candidate for the job will require that you create a list of potential choices and then go through a process of interviewing each one until you find the perfect match. Creating a list also allows you to understand which specific skill sets each handyman is best at, which will allow you to find the one that best meets with your needs.

Before you can go about creating a list of potential handymen, you have to find some first. There are several ways to go about this process, including performing online searches, but it is highly recommended that you get some referrals first. This is because most handymen build up their client base through networking. If you can get a referral from another person (or better yet from several people), then you can find a handyman who has already done a good job in the past. Also, many successful handymen don't waste too much of their money on advertising. Instead, they rely on their networks of happy customers to refer new clients.

Start searching for your new handyman by asking friends, relatives and neighbors for referrals. Odds are someone you know and trust has used a handyman before. If they have, ask about the specifics of their experience with their handyman. Did the handyman get the job done on time? Did he do the job to their satisfaction? Did they experience any problems? How much did they spend? Ask them if they would use the handyman again for another job or if they already have. This type of knowledge can be worth its weight in gold.

## The Better Option

If you don't know anyone who has had personal experience with a handyman, or your referral list is too small, then all you have to do is to a simple online search(just Google it) and read their reviews. This will give you a good idea on how trustworthy and reliable that handyman company is. As a rule of thumb, look for those that has a minimum of 4 stars rating with at least 50 reviews. Make sure that the company had been around for many years (min. 5yrs). To be on the safe side, choose a handyman company that is either HDB licensed or a BCA registered contractor. It would be a plus when they had both as it will give you a peace of mind.

The next step is to reach out to them and request for quote on you to do list.

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# Questions to Ask Your Handyman

The first question you will likely want to ask a handyman during the interview process is about their ability to perform your required task. Explain to them what you require (which should be easy because you have already made a list of jobs you need performed). Ask the handyman if he is experienced in these areas and whether or not they feel comfortable and confident to perform these specific tasks.

The second question to ask, once you are aware of the handyman's ability, ask if they offer a free estimate. Do they require a minimal charge? It is a good idea to remember that most handymen will **have** to charge a minimal rate or else they could lose money on equipment, materials and travel time. You should also be aware that handyman prices are often driven by the market and that there isn't really a set formula for these laborers to follow. Most handymen will also load the first hour. Have your potential handyman clearly explain their pricing structure to you. Have them give you a 'ball-park' figure if they can but be aware that it is difficult for any handyman to give you a 'carte blanche' estimate on any project, as there are many factors involved.

When it comes to deciphering a potential handyman's prices, what you are really looking for is an honest exchange of information. A decent handyman should help you understand what will be required to get your list of projects completed correctly. He should also help you to understand what could go wrong and alter the cost of the project. Let him know up front if you have an upper spending limit for this project. The goal is to have a clear understanding of how much a specific handyman will be charging you so that there are no surprises along the way. Best practice is to have the estimate in writing and not just verbally with the job scope details with material cost.

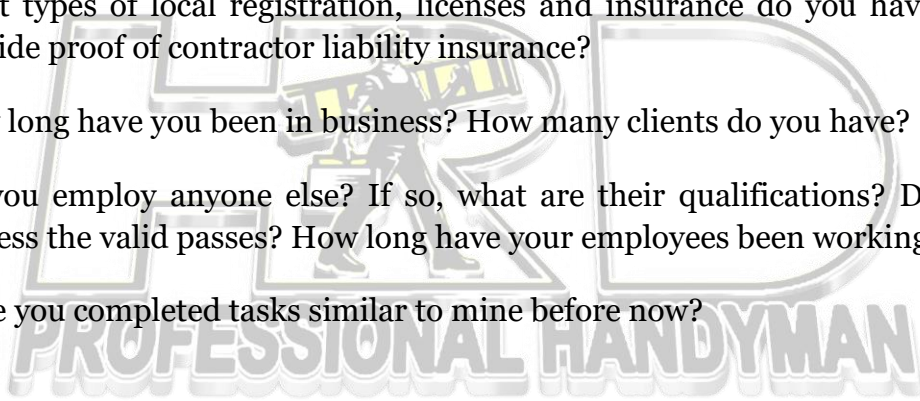
There is more to discuss with your potential handyman than just skills and pricing. You also want to be aware of some other factors. For example, some of the works require that home repair contractors to have specific licenses and are registered. These requirements may differ according to the size and scale of the project and others are based on the income of the contractor. In all, these requirements can be very confusing. It is a good idea for you to contact the authority(HDB/URA/BCA/MCST) to find out what specific requirements your handyman must have. You can also ask your potential handyman about this. Another thing to consider is liability insurance. For many jobs, even small ones, liability insurance is not optional. This is also an expense for the handyman that will most likely be passed along to you, so it is important to understand their individual level of coverage before you make any decisions.

Finally, since these people will be coming into your home, you may wish to ask a few personal questions. How long have they been in business? Do they have any employees

that will be working with them? Do they perform any background searches or other checks on their employees? Do the worker have valid passes eg. Work permit(by MOM)? Questions like this will you an idea of who you may be working with over time.

As a review, here is a general list of questions to ask a potential handyman before you hire them. This list may change according to your specific job requirements.

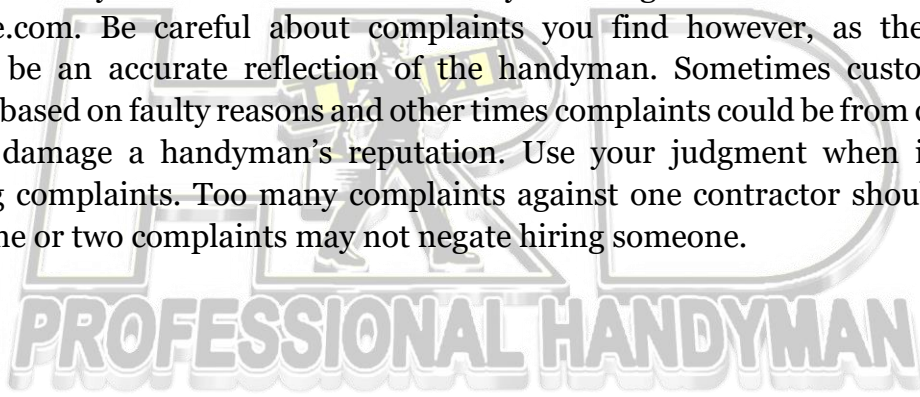
1. What are your abilities and experience? Can you perform the specific tasks on my list? Have you experience in these specific tasks? Are there any tasks that you may not feel comfortable performing?
2. How you charge for your services? Is it by hourly or per project basis? Do you charge a minimum rate? Do you charge for estimates? Do you charge for travel time? Who pays for materials? What happens if the end cost is higher than the estimate? Do you offer any form of guarantee?
3. What types of local registration, licenses and insurance do you have? Can you provide proof of contractor liability insurance?
4. How long have you been in business? How many clients do you have?
5. Do you employ anyone else? If so, what are their qualifications? Do they also possess the valid passes? How long have your employees been working for you?
6. Have you completed tasks similar to mine before now?



## Potential Problems with Your Handyman

Unfortunately, because of the nature of their job, problems with your handyman can develop. The job may not be done correctly, it may not be completed within the desired time frame or it could cost more than you originally thought. Sometimes handymen are really just scammers. These people will tell you that they can get the job done, then take your deposit and skip out. The interview process you perform before you hire a handyman should help to eliminate some of these problems. If it doesn't help you avoid problems then you will at least have a good idea of how your chosen handyman will correct such problems.

This is why you want to do your research. Ask your handyman for references and then check them. It is also a good idea to check up on your top choice **before** you hire them for the job. There are several ways you can do this. Check for consumer complaints lodged against your handyman. These can be found by checking online consumer review sites like Google.com. Be careful about complaints you find however, as they may not necessarily be an accurate reflection of the handyman. Sometimes customers lodge complaints based on faulty reasons and other times complaints could be from competitors looking to damage a handyman's reputation. Use your judgment when it comes to deciphering complaints. Too many complaints against one contractor should raise red flags, but one or two complaints may not negate hiring someone.



## When to Call a Specialist

In a perfect world your handyman would have an answer for everything. You could call them and they could show up and fix that leak in the roof, the drawer in the kitchen that won't open, re-caulk your upstairs shower and then build you a new set of stairs. In reality, this is rarely the case. Sometimes a handyman isn't enough. Sometimes you have to call in a specialist. For example, if you have a leaky faucet that is keeping you up at night, your favorite handyman could get that fixed for you. If however, you have low water pressure in all of your faucets, then repairing this may be too much for your handyman. He may not have the knowledge or the tools to deal with a full-fledged plumbing problem.

It is a good idea to understand the specific range of skills a potential handyman has before you consider hiring him. How much can he do? Can he do more than just repair a leaky faucet? Can he repair electrical work as well? Handymen fall into a very specific category. Often, if a handy person has a specific interest in plumbing, they will become a specialist. This is because these types of jobs often require that the contractor is licensed and, in some cases, part of a union. In many cases there is more money for them if they become a specialist.

There is also the cost factor to consider when you are deciding whether to use a handyman or a specialist for a certain job. For small repairs, a handyman is going to be the cheaper option. Being a specialist requires more equipment, more training and therefore a higher price tag. If your home repair or renovation project is under a certain amount, say \$500, then the cheapest option for you would be the handyman. However, as the price rises, so does the level of efficiency for a specialist. If your home project requires that all of the pipes in your house need to be replaced, then it might be more cost efficient to hire a specialist. They are more likely to have specialized tools and equipment that will get the job done faster and easier.

The cost/benefit analysis of your home repair or renovation project will be a deciding factor on whether or not you have to bring in a specialist, or if your handyman can get the job done. It's really about common sense. When looking for a handyman you have to match their skill set with your home repair requirements. Once you are able to do that you and your handyman could have a long and lasting relationship.

# Hiring a Handyman

Your instincts should play an important role in deciding which of your potential choices you are going to hire. If your research turns up any disturbing or worrisome information then don't choose that contractor. Your family's safety comes first. Choose a candidate that you feel comfortable with. Once you understand their skill level, their pricing scale and their previous levels of customer satisfactions, you can base the rest of your decision on personal feelings. Did you like the handyman? Did he give you a good feeling? Do you feel like you can trust him around your home? Are you reasonably sure he will get the job done right, and if not, will he do what is necessary to fix the damage? If you can answer yes to all of these questions then you have probably found your handyman!

The next step is to call your choice and give him the good news. You may also want to call the other potentials on your list and tell them that you will not be requiring their services out of courtesy. Once you and your choice have agreed to begin working together you can start working out a contract.

It is a good idea to do a walk-through with your handyman before you agree to start a job together. This way they can see what work needs to be done and will be able to provide you with a more accurate estimate. **Before** the handyman begins any work on your home you should create a contract between you both. This signed agreement will vastly increase your odds of getting the job done right the first time. For smaller jobs a simple written work order should be sufficient. For larger jobs you may wish to go for a detailed contract. Some handyman will provide their own standard contract. You can use this contract- just be sure to carefully review it first and make sure it contains everything you require in it. If it doesn't do not feel pressured to use it! Here is what should be included in your handyman contract:

- The start and projected completion dates for the project.
- A detailed list of materials and equipment to be used.
- A list of all work that is to be performed.
- Criteria for the project's required quality.
- A list stating who is responsible for selecting materials, purchasing materials, storing materials and accepting delivery of materials.

- A list stating who is responsible for protecting your house, your furnishings and anything else around your home. This could include construction-related damage or weather-related problems.
- Requirements for insurance coverage or bond coverage for the job.
- Some form of warranty on the work being performed and on the final project.
- Any specific worries or concerns you have about this project.





# Things to Be Aware Of

Here are some important things to be aware of when looking to hire a professional handyman:

- Pricing will vary according to individual contractors, but a handyman's hourly rate may not be an accurate reflection of their skills.
- It is common for handymen to charge a mark-up for materials. This mark-up can be anywhere from 20% to 100%, so it is necessary that you know about mark-up fees before you sign a contract. These mark-up fees are charged because the handyman has to take the time to shop for the materials for you. It may be possible for you to buy and transport your own materials in order to save money. This is something to discuss with your handyman before the jobs begins. Helpful handymen may even give you advice for shopping for your own materials.
- **Always** avoid hiring a handyman that shows up at your door unsolicited. Very often these people are scam artists or criminals attempting to set up some sort of scheme.
- **Never** hire any handyman without performing your research first!
- **Never** allow anyone to begin working on your home without signing a detailed contract first.
- **Never** agree to work with any contractor that makes you feel uncomfortable or pressures you into agreeing to things. It's simply not worth it.
- Try to remember that you have hired a professional handyman for a reason. These people know their business. Respect that by staying involved with the project but don't go overboard! Allow them to do their job and don't bother them with too many questions or opinions. That being said- if you have a real question or concern- speak up!
- If your handyman does a good job- then tell them about it. If you enjoyed the entire process then spread the word. It is always a good idea to help out your local small business person with positive referrals and recommendations. If you like your handyman- then keep them around!

## Before and After Your Handyman Arrives

Odds are you will be paying your handyman by the project basis. This means it benefits you to make his time in your home as efficient as possible. There are several things you can do to make your handyman's workload more efficient. Many of these things will also make your handyman's life easier, which he will certainly appreciate. Before your handyman arrives for the job:

- Get the project space ready. Remove your personal effects so there is room to work. If you are responsible for the materials, have them ready to go when he arrives. There is no point in having him sit around while you go shopping.
- Arrange for a place for your handyman to park. Clear a spot in the driveway or tell him where the best place to park is.
- Give him room. Tell the kids to play in another room and arrange for your pets to be somewhere else. Some people are more afraid of certain pets, such as large dogs, than others. Respecting the fact that your handyman may not want to hang out with your dog can be very helpful to him.
- Show him the bathroom you would like him to use so he knows. This is also true of where he can get a glass of water if you allow him to. It also may be helpful to show him where the fuse panels and other important things are in the house, in case he needs to locate them. This will save time because he won't have to search for them during the project.
- Make sure there is a clear space between the point of entry and the project space. Don't make your handyman carry materials over your stuff. A little respect can go a long way!

You should also go through several steps after the job is done to make sure everything went according to plan. These steps should be performed before the handyman leaves the job site and certainly before any money changes hands. Here are some steps to take after the job is finished:

- Do a walk-through with your handyman. Point out any potential problems you see. Ask questions about the work that was performed and the materials that were installed. Have your handyman explain any parts of the process you are not sure of.

- If you see a potential problem, point it out to your handyman right away. Take pictures if necessary.
- Check the rest of the house beyond the project space. Point out any problems created by the handyman, such as muddy shoe prints, damage to the lawn by the handyman's vehicle or anything else that may have occurred. Be aware that accidents do happen. Give your handyman the chance to correct any mistakes or problems. Most of the time they will work hard to correct the problem for you.
- If you do see a problem, discuss it openly with your handyman. Ask him how he intends to rectify the situation. Refer to your signed contract, if necessary, as it should include steps the contractor will take to resolve any problems.
- If your handyman doesn't make the necessary efforts to repair any problems or get the job done right, then you can file a complaint with the CASE. Again, give your handyman a decent chance to correct the problem before you attack their reputation.



## Conclusion

Finding the right handyman for your situation could make your life a lot easier. Having a trustworthy and competent handyman around allows you to focus on other parts of your life. It lets you know that simple repairs and problems can be fixed simply by picking up the phone. Dealing a problematic handyman or handyman company can be very daunting, but this is less likely to occur if you take the time to perform your research before you make any hiring decisions.

Performing your research will help ensure that you pick the right handyman for the job. Most people will keep a handyman they like around for years. It's nice to have a trusted person who can repair or build anything you need done, whether it is fixing a leaky faucet or installing a new cabinet. There is also another and often unseen benefit of hiring a good handyman. Having a great handyman can take some of the pressure off of couples, because one doesn't have to rely on the other to perform such repairs. This often leads to a happier couple!



# Handyman Check-List

1. Find out what needs to be done around your home. Make an organized and prioritized list of all repairs and renovations. This will help you better understand what handyman skills you will be looking for.
2. Create a list of 3-5 potential handyman candidates. Gather this list from referrals or by performing some standard searches.
3. Interview each of your candidates. Ask about their level of expertise, their pricing structure, how they guarantee their work and if they are licensed and insured. Ask about references too.
4. Check up on the references given to you by your potential choices. Then do some research on your potential choices. Check for complaints or negative reviews lodged against the handyman or handyman company. Look for positive recommendations or referrals as well.
5. Choose your handyman based on their skills, their prices and how you feel about them. Then hire them! (Remember – Price vs Quality)
6. Do a walk-through of your home with your newly chosen handyman. Ask questions and make sure you are both clear on what needs to be done.
7. Create a detailed agreement or contract that lays out what specifically the handyman will be doing for you. Both of you should sign this agreement **before** any work begins.
8. Prepare your home for the job by organizing materials and clearing work spaces. This will help the process go faster and more smoothly.
9. Do another walk-through after the job with your handyman to ask questions or discuss potential problems. Give your handyman a chance to repair any problems. If you cannot resolve any problems then you can register a complaint with the Better Business Bureau or through other sources.
10. If you like your handyman- tell him so! Recommend him to other people and keep him around as long as you need repairs to your home.

## **Next Steps**

Thank you again for downloading this free report. We hope that you found it useful and it has given you the information you need to help you better understand the most important things you should know before hiring a handyman.

If you would like additional assistance, please contact us at:

**HRD Professional Handyman Pte Ltd**

**Whatsapp or call us at 8318 9200**

