



5 Steps to Choosing the Right Deck Contractor



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Introduction: Choosing the Right Deck Builder

The rising popularity of family “staycations” have resulted in an increasing number of home owners embracing new and exciting outdoor living trends. Patios and deck have rapidly evolved into a more functional extension of your home space, and the possibilities continue to grow.

Outdoor space is often thought of as one of the more pleasant areas to spend time and relax with your family, and if designed correctly, can become the focal point of your social festivities for years to come. With so much riding on such a sizable investment, it is crucial to find a competent and experienced deck builder to construct your outdoor space.



Step 1: DO background research on the company

Helpful Tip:

Ask for references! Go and visit completed projects by the contractors you are considering or talk to previous clients to acquire a better perspective of the quality of their advertised work. But don't just limit yourself and request a list of the last customers with similar projects from the past two years. This way you can gage product satisfaction and follow-up with warranty repair.



Just like an employer reads an applicant's resume – you want to familiarize yourself with some basic information. Knowing the answers to the following questions will give you the upper hand when contacting your potential contractor:

- ✓ How much experience do they have working in the industry?
- ✓ How well known is the company?
- ✓ Are there customer reviews or completed product photos available?
- ✓ Were they easy to contact personally – or did you have to leave a message?

Find your contractor on popular home renovation sites



Here are some ways to find a good deck builder:

Question Family and Friends about their past decking installments; Who did their work? What was their overall construction experience? Did the quality of the final product meet expectations? If you need more information, many home builders are affiliated with contractors specializing in decking, and will often have a list of those they recommend on their websites. In addition, the home renovation website **Homestars.com** features numerous reviews from previous customers, and can provide valuable information. Even something simple such as searching deck builders in your area on **Google** can yield surprisingly positive results. Generally a competent builder/company will have a website proudly showing off his work. Reviewing those companies on your search that appear on the first page of Google is an easy way to separate the best from the rest. Another



tip is to call your local lumber yard and ask them if they have any contractors they would recommend – generally you can get at least 2-3 candidates using this technique.

Contact 2 or 3 Companies from your research you feel comfortable with and invite them to come out to your home to review your project. Make sure you give as much information as you can up front regarding your vision, as no detail is too small. Things like deck form, dimensions, potential materials, inclusion of railings or stairs, and ideal placement are all variables that could impact a variety of factors in your overall project plan. This will also hope your builder to convey a more accurate quote on your work, and judging by their response, it is an easy way for you to gauge their experience.

Make sure you ask your builder **for references of past jobs** similar to the project you wish to have completed. If possible, attempt to acquire contact information for their prior customers. Reaching out to those who have

experience with the builder in the past is a great way to collect additional information, and gives you a more in depth profile of their services. Determining prior job satisfaction goes a long way in predicting future job satisfaction, and if the builder's customers review him or her poorly, you'll know to continue your search. Be sure to investigate these pricing of these past projects as well, as this is a good way to tell if your quoted budget is fair.

Choosing a deck builder is no easy task, and as with most things in the building industry, your selection will typically boil down to one thing: Trust. Lack of security or trust in your potential deck builder is a non-starter, and will only give you headaches if you decide to move forward with them. If you sense this to be an issue, it's usually best not to risk hiring them in the first place. After all, the **two most important factors in choosing a deck builder are level of ability and the ease in which they can relate and associate themselves with you.**



Step 2:

DO lay out all the fine details of the price

Helpful Tip:

Request a copy of the plan. This will ensure you can review them at any time with the contractor and avoid changes to the products or plan details without your consent. Written plans are also required for the permitting process.

Read all documents given to you by the contractor – including all the fine print! Don't be fooled by generic pricing and project estimates. Be assertive and request detailed price listings for all the unique characteristics of the design you imagine for you and your home. Once you have established a firm price be sure to get all the agreed terms in writing. For instance:

- ✓ Construction start/completion dates;
- ✓ Surface preparation (E.g. removing old decking, railings and replacing plywood/framework);
- ✓ Final quote of the project;
- ✓ Location for material/lumbar drop. If not discussed, this could lead to damage to your lawn or block your driveway;
- ✓ Responsibility of the clean up of excess lumbar, dropped hardware, litter, etc.;
- ✓ Terms of the product/services warranty.



Step 3: DO compare competitive pricing

Helpful Tip:

Ask about the maintenance of your deck. Inquire how often the deck of your choice should be varnished and inspected to guarantee an optimal lifespan of the product you purchased.



The following four categories discuss topics you should consider when debating between your final builder finalists:

Quality of materials: You should take into consideration the durability, longevity and intended use of all the products in your design. For example, if your renovation will be creating a high traffic area, you should choose products that not only look great now, but will remain in the same condition over time. Trying to save a little money now by reducing the quality of your materials may seem like a viable option, but it is ultimately short-sighted. Though suppliers will have no problem selling

you lower quality material to turn a profit, the added cost of repair or replacement may end up costing you more in the long run.

Workmanship: How dedicated is their business to your project? Be aware of the schedule set out to complete your project and ensure that your deadline is being met. Ensure that the contractor takes protecting your existing property into consideration and is mindful to avoid potential damages during the construction process. Take note if the contractor mentions methods to properly protect against water damage, prevention of improper attachment to the house and stable framing foundations. Municipal codes have a very basic standard. Know what these standards are and strive to find a contractor who wants to exceed them in their plans.

Business practices: It is important to view the proof and terms of the liability and worker insurance of your contractor. Be sure to discuss who is liable to absorb the cost of unexpected difficulties when they arise (e.g. such as damage to city utility lines). Without



coverage, you will be held responsible for the incident and liable for the cost of repairs.

Project integrity: Applying for a building permits is something you will need to agree upon with your builder as well. Though this is ultimately the responsibility of the homeowner, some contractors offer to take care of the application process as one of their services. Going this route does have its advantages, as contractors can then make sure their work complies with all municipal building codes. Keep in mind that projects left without a permit could lead to insurance or property transfer issues down the road.

Step 4: DO choose a contractor that shares your vision

Helpful Tip:

Lay out house rules. You want to hire a contractor that will be respectful of you and your home including your personal utilities and bathroom facilities.



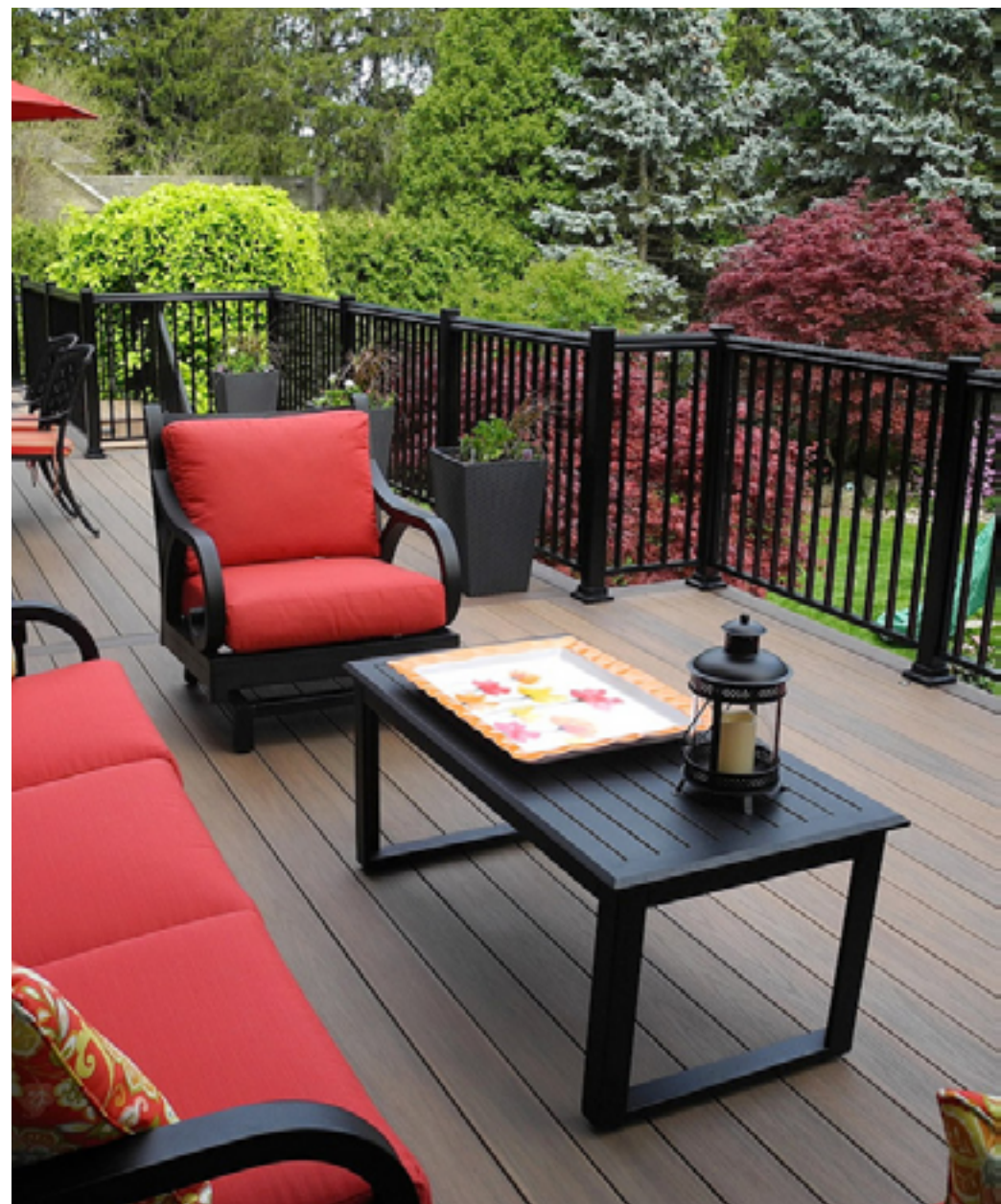
At the end of the day, you have to be happy with the outcome of your project. You want to select a contractor that incorporates you, and your tastes/values into the design, product selection and theme. It is important that you feel comfortable asking questions and making suggestions to your contractor in order to ensure you get exactly what you are paying for. You don't want to hire a contractor that makes it seem like communicating with you is a hassle.

Communication goes beyond selecting size, shape and price. An excellent contractor will want to consider why you are undertaking the project and what impact you want it to have on your lifestyle.



Keeping with the communication theme, **DO NOT allow your builder to alter your design and build a deck that you did not ask for or will not be happy with.** It is not uncommon during the design process for the customer to create a visualization of what they're expecting for their final product, only to have the builder redesign or alter the project as they work. Though unforeseen circumstance can occur that may have an impact on your construction, it is typical of builders to stay inside their own comfort zone. If your design calls for something the builder is not accustomed to and is uncomfortable with, he may attempt to alter the design to something easier for him to build.

Keep in mind, there is nothing wrong with saying “no!” to your builder if they are not following the instructions or design agreed upon before your project was started. This is your hard-earned money you've got invested here after all. There is no reason that your project construction cannot be a pleasant experience for all parties, and by hiring a builder with the ability to complete it properly and efficiently, you can save yourself the headaches associated with most home renovations.



Step 5: Do watch for these danger signs

Helpful Tip:

Go with your gut instinct and keep educated. The more you know about the products and services you want completed, the less likely unprofessional contractors will want to take on a job with you.



If you encounter any of the following situations while initially communicating with a contractor, it might be a red flag that you are better off to move on:

- ✔ Payment policy of cash only;
- ✔ Requests more than 1/2 of the contract value as a deposit until the start of construction;
- ✔ Persistent pressure for an immediate commitment;
- ✔ Cannot provide proof of insurance/ applicable licensing;
- ✔ Requires you to apply for necessary permits;
- ✔ Considers the following a binding agreement: handshake, notes written on a business card, casual discussions.

Useful Links

Home Renovation Sites

homestars.com
angieslist.com
houzz.com

Low Maintenance Decking

Trex
TimberTech
Kleer
Guardeck
WeatherReady
Fiberon
Endeck
Azek

Wood Decking

Bison
Real Cedar
Taiga Building – Pressure Treated

Alternative Surfaces

Stone Deck
Rubaroc
Softile
Aluminum Decking
Artificial Grass
Azek Pavers (Vast Pavers)

Railings, screens, fences

Star Rail
Ultra Rail

Deckorators
Fortress Rail
Prova System
Nuvo Iron

Under Deck Systems

Zip Up
Dry Space
Rain Escape
Dek Drain

Shade Products

Adjustable Patio Covers
Solana Awnings

Pools & Spas

MAAX Spas
Dolphin Pools

Deck Lighting

High Point Deck Lighting
Aurora Experience
TimberTech Deck Lites
De-Kor
Trex Lights
Azek Lights
Fortress Lights

Hidden Fasteners

HidFast Fasteners
Shadoe Track

Mantis Clip
Hidden Link
Cortex
Camo
The Deck Clip

Deck Hardware

Titan Post Anchor
EZ Post
Simpson Strong Tie
Starborn Screws
TrimTop Screws
Fastenmaster Screws
SigmaDek

Stains & Finishes

Penofin
Messmers
Deck Max

The Deck Store Social Networks

LinkedIn
Facebook
Google+
Youtube
Twitter
Pinterest
Flickr

Images credits:

TimberTech (p.3), The Deck Store

Recommended Reading



**7 Ways New Materials
& Technology are
Changing Deck
Designing**

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**Landscaping Tips,
Inspirational Plans,
Local Industry Suppliers,
and much more!**

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to Live & Love
BLOG**

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Transform Homes & Yards

Toronto

416-749-3963

789 Arrow Road, Unit 10, Toronto, ON

Milton

905-878-1418

8473 Regional Road 25 Milton, ON

Oakville

905-337-7707

454 South Service Rd. West, Oakville, ON

Oshawa

905-725-1957

133 Taunton Road West, Oshawa, ON

[Get Directions to Local Showroom](#)

DeckStore.ca

Outdoor Spaces to Live & Love

[Request Complimentary Consultation](#)

or call: 1-866-618-4154