

# Comparing estimates: questions to ask

Ask each builder the same questions and write down what you hear. The answers often explain why the numbers differ.

| Question                                                                          | Builder name | Builder name | Builder name |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| What assumptions are included in this estimate?                                   |              |              |              |
| What isn't included that could affect the final cost later?                       |              |              |              |
| How do you handle unforeseen conditions if they're uncovered during construction? |              |              |              |
| Based on your experience, where do you see the biggest unknowns in this project?  |              |              |              |
| What would trigger a change order?                                                |              |              |              |
| How are allowances determined?                                                    |              |              |              |
| If something changes, how and when will additional costs be communicated?         |              |              |              |

The number is important. But so is understanding how the builder arrived at it.

# A few more things worth asking

You don't need to ask every one of these. Start with what matters most for your project.

| Question                                                                                       | Builder name | Builder name | Builder name |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PRICE</b>                                                            |              |              |              |
| Who is responsible for permits, and is that cost included?                                     |              |              |              |
| Which products and materials are priced, and which are placeholders until selections are made? |              |              |              |
| Who handles cleanup, debris removal and protecting the rest of the home?                       |              |              |              |
| Are there markups or fees on changes, and how are they calculated?                             |              |              |              |
| <b>SCHEDULE AND PAYMENT</b>                                                                    |              |              |              |
| When could work start, and how long is the project expected to take?                           |              |              |              |
| What could affect that timeline, such as permits, material lead times or weather?              |              |              |              |
| What is the payment schedule, and what is each payment tied to?                                |              |              |              |
| How much is due before work begins?                                                            |              |              |              |
| <b>EXPERIENCE AND PROTECTION</b>                                                               |              |              |              |
| Can you show proof of license and insurance?                                                   |              |              |              |
| What warranty covers the work, and how do I request service?                                   |              |              |              |
| Can I speak with past clients who had projects similar to mine?                                |              |              |              |