

How do you find a reputable builder?

Building a custom home can be one of the most daunting tasks a couple undertakes. Most people only do this once; a few, twice. They all have heard horrific stories from friends or acquaintances of an experience that was just so bad that they said, “I’ll never do that again!” So the question remains: How do you find a reputable builder?

First you need to know what you’re looking for: What does *reputable* really mean? In most cases, whether you are looking for a mechanic, a dentist, or a house cleaner, the answer is the same: integrity, knowledge, and experience. Integrity is simply knowing that your builder will do the right thing no matter what—period. While knowledge is gained from reading, doing, watching, and listening, experience can only be acquired from *doing*. The more you do, the more skill and experience you have.

Now that you know what you are looking for, how do you find this builder? References from friends, Realtors, supply businesses (such as an appliance store), architects, and other sources is one way, but perhaps the best way is to ride around and look for job sites that are under construction. Stop and ask someone if you can speak to the builder. (If he is not on-site, this may be your first clue.) However you get the names, get at least three who come highly recommended.

Now the most important parts: the interview and references. Make a list of the questions that you want answered and note the builder’s responses. Be sure to cover all phases of the project in your questions: planning, budgeting, construction, and after-construction follow-up. And be sure to get references. As interviewing is difficult to do even if one is trained in this field, getting references is of the utmost importance. Ask for references from homeowners, bankers, codes inspectors, subcontractors, and, yes, other builders. Keeping in mind that the references you’re given are those who will give positive reviews of the builder, give these people a call. After you get past the first part of the conversation where the reference sings the builder’s praises, you can ask the important questions: What does this builder do that makes him so good? (Here is where you must really listen and not talk; give the person time to think this through and answer.) What is it about the way he does this that makes him a great builder?

Using this approach, I am confident you will find one of the many highly qualified, reputable builders available in Middle Tennessee.

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