

10 COMMON MISTAKES HOMEOWNERS MAKE

WHEN HIRING A HOME SERVICE PRO



A practical guide to protecting your home and hiring with confidence

By Rick E. Patterson | 2026 Edition

Introduction



Rick's straightforward advice in knowing what to look for in a Home Service Pro provides useful safeguards and practical tips on conducting an effective Home Service Pro background check for the selection of trustworthy Home Service Pros.

Although there are many unpredictable variables in why people behave in a certain way, *10 Common Mistakes Homeowners Make When Hiring A Home Service Pro* © provides unique insights into how the average homeowner can protect themselves from fraudulent and "shady" Home Service Pros.

These precautionary guidelines follow a rational and methodical approach in the process of selecting the right Home Service Pro for the right job and for you!

Hello Friend, Thank you for choosing my eBook with its relevant message to homeowners everywhere.

I have people in my life I genuinely care about, and I want them, and you, to feel informed, confident, and safe when hiring someone to work in a home.

That is why I want to help you avoid these 10 common mistakes when hiring a home service pro. The journey in writing this eBook all started on an occasion of meeting my very first client many years ago.

I had officially gone into business as Home Service Pro and wanted to get the word out in the community in which I lived. I had gone to a nearby neighborhood and began knocking on doors.

Yes, the old fashioned way of marketing! The very first potential client I encountered that day was the lady of the house. I knocked on her front door.

Upon opening her door, I began explaining, handing her a freshly printed flyer, who I was and what I did for a living.

As she was looking through the list of services on the flyer, she asked me if I fixed gutters, to which I answered, "Yes, Ma'am!" (a southern term of respect).

She then did something that was quite appalling, shocking, and surprising!

She said, "Well come on in and let's walk to the back door to take a look out in the backyard!" She unlatched the screen door and let me in, turning her back to me and leading me through her house to the backyard!

What's wrong with this picture?!! Excuse Me While I Rant Here in Disbelief...

I was a total stranger that came to her front door, basically out of "nowhere", handing her a flyer that I could have made up, plus giving a "made-up name"

And this lady just opens the door to a total stranger allowing me to walk through her home...especially with her back turned to a total stranger!

This was the first of many situations I experienced, and of the many horror stories that were shared with me through the years as a Home Service Pro working in the homes of Homeowners.

All far too many to share here.

I have narrowed these incidents down to ten vitally important areas that I have discovered to be common mistakes among my clients of which 85% of all my total client base are women.

In conclusion, as a man, a husband, a son, a big brother, a father, and finally as a reputable Home Service Pro, I am sharing this information out of precaution and honest concern with as many Homeowners that will take the time to educate, equip, and empower themselves with the knowledge revealed here in... 10 Common Mistakes Homeowners Make When Hiring Home Service Pros© Here's to your success and safety,

Bonus: How to Find a Reliable Home Service Pro



The Right Home Service Pro For You and The Project "The Elusive Search for the Reliable, Reputable Home Service Pros: How and Where to Find Them!" The following information is the first step to getting started on the right path when searching for a reputable Home Service Pro who is honest and dependable.

The very best and strongest resources to call upon when searching for a reputable Home Service Pro are others who they have called upon and also recommend their services.

Here are some proven resources to call upon: Online Reviews.

Although this is the easiest method which does not involve others directly as do the ones listed below, researching online reviews can be a trustworthy resource.

Using this method, you will have to do so with some patience and some investigative "leg-work".

When researching through and scouring over the potential Home Service Pro's reviews, click on the profile picture or name of the person that gave the review and message them directly if you have any questions.

Most locator sites will have reviews of previous clients and their experiences.

Note: "You can't satisfy all the people all the time" is how the old adage goes; yet if there is a less than perfect 5-star review, see if the Home Service Pro replied and tried to resolve any unresolved issues.

That will tell you most likely how he will treat you if a conflict arises.

Here is a list of a few major, reliable locator sites with reviews: o Google.com o Thumbtack.com o Yelp.com o Porch.com o HomeAdvisor.com o Angi.com o Better Business Bureau, BBB.com

- Neighbors.

Asking neighbors who they have used in the past is a great way to establish stronger relationships of trust and goodwill between each other; and at the same time, gives you personal insight into the character of the Home Service Pro.

You may even ask your neighbor for permission to take a firsthand look at the quality of work performed in their home.

Seeing the Home Service Pro's work in person will also answer your concerns about their craftsmanship.

- Homeowners Associations.

If you live in a subdivision and have an HOA, you can call upon the directors of the HOA for referrals of whom they or the HOA members call upon, and perhaps solicit any recommendations of which Home Service Pros to avoid!

NOTE: If you do not have an HOA in your neighborhood, you can call upon other local HOAs for the same information.

Often times, these HOA directors will call you back quickly and answer any inquiries you have regarding your search for a reputable Home Service Pro.

- Local Churches.

Many churches have a business directory in which their own membership participates. Usually the receptionist will be more than glad to refer the names of Home Service Pros in their directory.

By all means churches are there to serve the community!

One subtle way of weeding out the "undesirables" really quickly is to ask, "Who would you call upon to take care of your mother's home repair issues?" This effective question can be used with any resource you call upon!

- Friends, Relatives and Co-workers.

The purpose in calling upon these resources last is due to their location. Perhaps not all of these people live in the same area as you do, so asking them may not be as fruitful as desired.

If they do, then this should naturally be your first resource to call upon!

- Facebook.

Facebook groups have grown into the thousands of local people who will gladly recommend their favorite Home Service Pro. Simply post, "Who do you recommend for... (your project needs).

You will get a flood of recommendations from people who have worked with home service pros in your local area!

The Initial Phone Call and Interview



There is an art to asking people probing questions in a conversation that does not offend and allows you to get the information desired.

Keep in mind one thing to remember here, the Home Service Pros you call upon may not have polished phone skills which do not matter. You are looking for honesty and reliability.

These are the usual informational-gathering inquiries that you may wish to start with, for example:

- How long have you been in this career field, in business, in the area, etc.?
- How many helpers do you have working with you?
- Do you offer free in-home quotes?
- Do you charge by the hour or by the job?
- Do you work on more than one job site at a time?

The previous question will give you more of a talking point regarding the Home Service Pro's practice of "job hopping" in order to "lock in" the work for himself and keep other Home Service Pros from seizing the opportunity for work.

(A very common practice.) NOTE: You do not want to do business with this Home Service Pro if his references have been done this way. The tendency is to capture a contract on every quote bid on.

Unless, the Home Service Pro has a number of crews to handle the work from start to finish in a timely manner, you do not want to be the one waiting to have your work long overdue on completion while they are working on someone else's jobs!

These following questions are blunt and more direct and require a simple answer. You should only get "YES or NO" to these questions!

Here are questions to ask the contractor in order to quickly qualify them over the phone:

- Are you a licensed Home Service Pro?

Ask this only if the Home Service Pro is required to have a state board approved certificate. Find out by calling the licensing office in your city, county/parish, or state.

Let the licensing personnel know what kind of work you need to have performed in your home so you can get the correct answer. Certain trades do not require a state board license.

There are exceptions to certain trades. Note: Don't be confused between having a state license certification and having a business license! They are not the same.

- Do you have a current business license?

Every single Home Service Pro doing business is required by every municipal/county/parish tax office to have a current business license! Without exception!

Most states will support the business license of a local municipal/county/parish tax office throughout the state.

If the Home Service Pro does not have a current business license, you do not want to do business with them. If they cheat in one area, what other areas are they cheating in? Sobering question.

- Do you have a current Contractor Liability and Worker's Compensation insurance policies?

There are all kinds of different insurance policies available on the market today. Warning: You do not want any Home Service Pro or staff working on your property without it.

The two different policies cover you and covers them in case there is a claim while working on your property. Without it...This is a recipe for disaster. Protect yourself!

- Do you have 5 reliable references of clients you've done work for with names, addresses, and phone numbers?

This is the tell-tale of all the information you desire to know about the Home Service Pro.

Here you can find out what you really want to know about the Home Service Pro's character, work ethics, personality, quality of craftsmanship, and professionalism.

More on this subject is covered in Mistake #4 below.

- Do you do the work yourself or do you have others do the work for you?

The answer to this question will definitely be a deciding factor for most homeowners. o If you are hiring a Home Service Pro company, then you have to ask if the Home Service Pro staff has had a criminal background check on each member in its employment.

This provides you an extra layer of protection.

Often times, hiring a Home Service Pro company means you have a larger diversity in the services available to you to complete more complex, layered projects, rather than using just one Home Service Pro who may be great in a couple of trade skills, but not in every trade skill. o If you are hiring an individual Home Service Pro with no helpers, then in some cases, the Home Service Pro can provide you with limited services that he alone is genius in.

Note: You may have to form a "team" of skilled contractors who can be called on to complete more complex projects than the one Home Service Pro is capable of handling. o If you are hiring an individual Home Service Pro with helpers, then in some cases the Home Service Pro will have a crew doing some or all of the work with him.

However, if he is not present on the property at all times, there could be some security and supervisory issues to address ahead of time.

Note: If the individual Home Service Pro is not the one who is doing all of the work, the question to consider will you or a family member be there to supervise the activity in and around the home?

Are you prepared to take a chance not knowing if the Home Service Pro has new, non-vetted crew members? The individual Home Service Pro can only be as strong as his weakest crew member. Expectations!

In most cases where there has arisen a conflict in the communications between the homeowner and the Home Service Pro, there always has been a lack of clear understanding of expectations of both parties involved.

It is vital to prepare the Home Service Pro of what you expect from him and what he can expect from you.

In so doing, you will let him know you are a savvy and empowered potential client that must be reckoned with and won't be taken advantage of.

A legitimate, professional Home Service Pro will respect and understand your concerns as a homeowner right from the start! I'll talk more about getting specific expectations in writing further down.

As you set the appointment for a quote/estimate, require the Home Service Pro bring a copy of the: Trade License(s) (Some state/county requirements may vary) Business License Home Service Pro's Current Liability Insurance Policy 5 Clients Reference Sheet with names, addresses, and phone

numbers.

Inform the Home Service Pro that it is your intention to allow them to earn your trust and your business, and that you require this to be presented at the time of the quote/estimate without exceptions.

Ask point blank, "Is this an issue for you?" The Home Service Pro you want will comply with your wishes without any hesitations!

The 10 Common Mistakes from fraudulent and "shady" individuals who pose as legitimate Home Service Pros, it is very important that you take into consideration all of the common mistakes and make the necessary corrections immediately!

Mistake #1: Not Asking For ID Before Entry



You never know exactly who or "what" is coming to your door.

Yes, you may have spoken to the Home Service Pro on the phone, but you've never seen this person before, and you need to know who you've been talking with.

Always let someone know that you have a Home Service Pro coming to your home. Give that person their name and phone number along with the time of arrival.

Tell that person that you will let them know when they leave.

Upon arrival, ask the Home Service Pro for a State ID with picture or a driver's license so you can identify them by name, address and a driver's license number in order to have a better idea who they are.

Always check it before you even let them in. You may wish to get a copy of that ID as a requirement before you sign a contract.

(In my experience, no one has ever asked me for a copy of or to see my ID...but it's not a bad idea!)

Mistake #2: Not Asking For



A Copy of CURRENT Proof of Insurance You must know that the Home Service Pro has Contractor's General Liability Insurance and that it is current and up to date!

Be sure to get the agent's or insurance company's phone number to call and confirm the policy is current. Often time, the policy can elapse unknown to the Home Service Pro.

NOTE: The risks of liability are too great if something were to go wrong. There must be an established control of risk management prior to the commencement of any project or job started in your home.

No matter if they are roof contractors, remodeling contractors, paint contractors, plumbing contractors, a carpenter or a Home Service Pro; they must have valid proof of general liability insurance!

They can email it, text it, or just bring a copy with them when they come to your home.

Mistake #3: Not Asking To See Their Business License



The reason you ask to see their business license is for accountability. Are they registered to do business in your state, county/parish, or city?

The threat of losing their business license is always a good deterrent to any scams or misdealing in the future.

If they do not have a business license, it is recommended to move on to the Home Service Pro that wishes to show his integrity and accountability not only to you, but to those in authority.

If they are going to cheat here, where and who else will they cheat?

Mistake #4: Not Checking Their References BEFORE Accepting the Bid



Ask the Home Service Pro to submit the names, and phone numbers of at least 5 clients for whom they have done work previously.

When calling these previous clients let them know the reason for your brief call and ask them these 3 short & pointed questions:

- Was the Home Service Pro consistently late or miss an appointment or workday, and if so, did he call and explain ahead of time?
- Did he do exactly what he said he would do in the contract?
- Would you refer this Home Service Pro to work for your mother?

If no one answers when you call, leave a message about the nature of the call with your name and best call back number. Be sure to thank them for their time and honesty.

Mistake #5: Accepting Verbal Estimates



Never take on a project with nothing in writing!

If something were to go wrong, it would never hold much weight in court if things should break down and the burden of proof of what was agreed upon is not in writing!

Verbal agreements will be too difficult to prove or disprove. Always get everything in writing; what the Home Service Pro will and won't do, and what the Home Service Pro can expect from you.

Be sure to look for the fine print and anything on the back of the estimate or contract. A good contract will protect all parties involved.

Mistake #6: Not Fully Understanding the Estimate Before Signing



Never accept an agreement if you cannot clearly read and understand what is written in it. The estimate must be fully comprehensible. If the Home Service Pro writes, "Fix the sheetrock in wall...\$500".

Someone is going to have an argument eventually over the interpretation. It is always best to have all details of the project written out in its entirety.

NOTE: Be sure to read the fine print if any...look on the back of the contract as well!

If there is anything on the contract you do not agree with, simply strike through the item and have both parties initial and date the strike through.

Mistake #7: Not Asking For



A Work Warranty When you have a written work warranty, then you have something to fall back on if the work performed fails in the future.

In other words, if the Home Service Pro is going to do the sheetrock repair for \$500, will he stand behind his work? Is the Home Service Pro going to get a check from you and just disappear?

Will he make things right by fixing what went wrong if his work fails? Does he believe in what he is doing enough to back it with a 3-year work warranty?

If he is really competent and confident in his craftsmanship, he may even give you a 5-year warranty! These are the kind of Home Service Pros you want to work with.

Mistake #8: Not Commanding Common Courtesy



If the Home Service Pro is going to be late, does he call you and let you know what is going on ahead of time?

If he says he will be there at 3 pm and you've taken off early from work to meet for the appointment, and he is late and does not call, you may just have a bigger problem later during the project.

You must know if this Home Service Pro is personally accountable to you early on. Is your time and inconvenience important enough to him to call you?

Yes, schedules are challenging, and things get moved around a lot, however being late is not respectful especially without a phone call.

If you find yourself waiting for over 30 minutes after the agreed time of the appointment, check your cell's caller ID and text messaging.

Then ask them upon arrival if they tried to call or text to tell you they were running late. Note their answer. Do they offer an apology upfront? Common courtesy is always unspoken and expected.

Mistake #9: Allowing for a "NO SHOW"



The #1 complaint of all clients is that of not showing up for the appointment or project. The Home Service Pro is late, doesn't call, then adding insult to injury, he just does not even show up!

There is no reason to hire him/her. Keep moving on to the next one. You are certain to find someone who really wants your business and is willing to prove it to you from the very start.

Mistake #10: Paying for Services/Labor in Advance



It is customary in many trades to get a 10% non-refundable down payment for services/labor in advance. This has been a normal and accepted business practice for years.

For whatever reason, there have always been conflicts with both parties who each have a legitimate argument:

- Homeowners are reluctant to give any funds or advancements toward labor that has not been performed for fear that the Home Service Pro may skip with the money and not do the contracted work.
- Home Service Pros want to "lock-in" the job with a contract and a small non-refundable down payment, usually 10% to ensure the intent and sincerity of the homeowner.

This can be resolved easily.

- If the homeowner has done all the necessary background investigation on the Home Service Pro as mentioned previously, then there can be a compromise in the payment of the down payment.

The homeowner can agree to pay one half of the down payment immediately and the second half after the first day of work.

This agreement will ensure that the homeowner will get at least one day of work done at their home!

NOTE: Advancements should only be paid daily after the day's work is completed, even if the work is done in stages.

If the Home Service Pro is paid in advance, often times the Home Service Pro's motivation to get the work completed in a timely manner diminishes significantly.

As in any industry, anyone can be a success, or an utter failure at customer service. Not all Home Service Pros are unprofessional, dishonest, or even disrespectful.

Some very skilled and professional Home Service Pros may not be as polished as others but do have a good business sense about them.

These Home Service Pros are usually the busiest Home Service Pros because they have a good reputation to uphold and guard by treating you with care and respect.

You never really know who you are doing business with, even when a well-spoken Home Service Pro comes to your home to win your business. Do your homework!

Be wise to take the necessary precautions in knowing who you are inviting into your home before they arrive.

Most importantly, remember by avoiding the 10 Common Mistakes Homeowners Make When Hiring Home Service Pros © ...you are way "ahead of the game" and always in control!

FINAL THOUGHTS

Hire with confidence. Protect your home.

This guide was created to help homeowners make informed decisions, protect their investment, and build better working relationships with home service professionals.

At The Handyman Toolbox, we believe trust, clear communication, and quality workmanship should be the foundation of every project.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rick E. Patterson is a general contractor with over 47 years of experience remodeling and repairing hundreds of homes. Known as the "Go-To-Guy" by his loyal clients, 85% of whom are female, Rick has earned a reputation for quickly analyzing maintenance challenges and finding practical, creative solutions.

He is also a popular DIY home improvement YouTube host whose videos have received over 13 million views. Join the growing DIY home improvement community at The Handyman Toolbox.

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