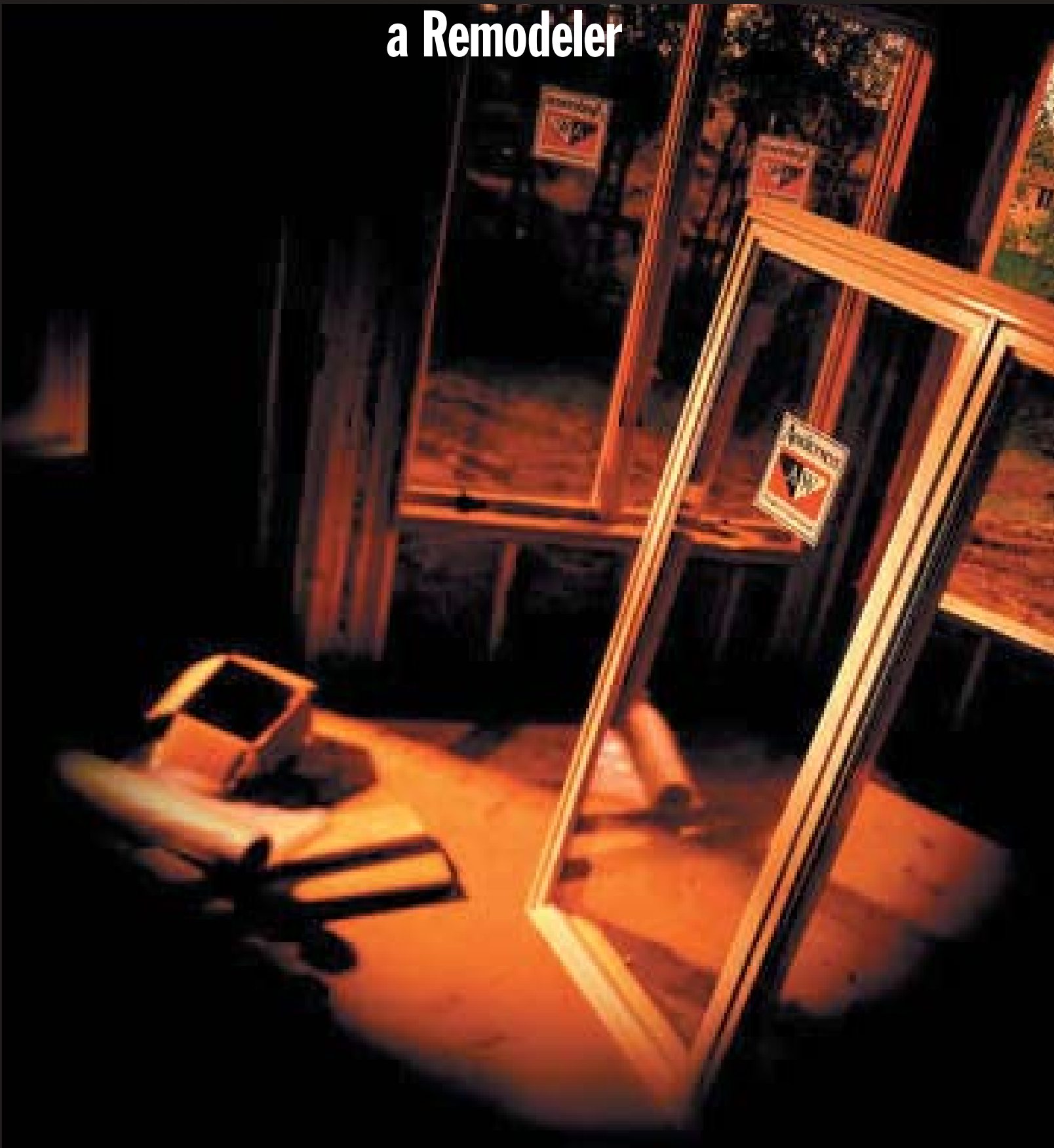


# How to Choose

## a Remodeler



# A Guide to getting the home you want

Choosing a remodeler. It isn't as simple as looking in the phone book. But it doesn't have to be difficult, either. By following this guide, you can easily find a reputable remodeler for almost any project.

## Getting Referrals

Your first step is to gather referrals. But how? Ask friends, family and neighbors who've recently had remodeling done. Talk to independent contractors, building materials suppliers, architects, local lenders and home inspectors. And contact trade associations such as your local National Association of Home Builders Remodelors™ Council.

## Double check

You now have a list of potential candidates. The next step is narrowing the list.

Begin by checking each remodeler's references. Ask each remodeler for names and phone numbers of their current and former customers. If possible, talk to these people in their homes so you can see the remodeler's work firsthand. Some questions to ask include:

- *Would you hire this company again?*
- *Did the remodeler maintain a neat worksite?*
- *Did the crew show up on time? Were you pleased with their work style?*

- *Did the remodeler finish the project on time and within budget?*
- *Was the remodeler easy to talk to and did he or she keep you informed as the job progressed?*

It's also smart to call your state or local consumer protection agency to find out if there are any unresolved complaints filed against the remodelers on your list.

To further protect yourself, check with your state's contractor licensing agency to verify that each remodeler is licensed.

## The interview

When you speak with remodelers, remember you're buying a service. Not a product. The quality of that service will determine the quality of the finished product and your satisfaction with it. With that in mind, here are some areas to explore when interviewing a remodeler.





### **Does the remodeler:**

- Carry insurance?
- Specialize in particular types of projects?
- Have a history of successful projects similar to yours?
- Have knowledge of the type and age of your home? Architectural knowledge of what is likely to be behind a wall helps the remodeler provide reliable estimates.
- Know what materials they'd likely use in your project?
- Offer options when selecting products, materials and techniques?
- Offer a warranty? If so, what kind and for how long?
- Have a long history in the business? Longevity usually suggests financial stability.
- Facilitate and encourage communication?

### **In addition, shy away from remodelers who:**


- Use high-pressure sales tactics.
- Are not willing to offer references, or the references provided were not happy with the contractor's work.
- Ask you to pay in advance for the entire job.
- Accept payment in cash only.

### **A word about estimates**

Once you've pared your list to two or three remodelers, ask for written estimates based on a set of plans and specifications. This is time-consuming for the contractor, so be prepared to pay for this.

To accurately assess estimates, make sure you're comparing apples to apples. Estimates from different remodelers need to be for identical project specifications.

Finally, don't let price alone determine who you pick. Your ranking of each remodeler in terms of customer service, competence and your overall comfort level should play a role, too.



## What you should know about contracts

You've picked a remodeler. However, no work should begin until you have a signed written agreement. Here are some basics your contract should include:

- *A visual presentation – blueprint, floor plan or sketches – that shows what the remodeler will do and where.*
- *A timetable, including approximate start and completion dates.*
- *The price and payment schedule.*
- *Detailed specifications for all products and materials.*
- *Information on who will obtain and pay for necessary permits.*
- *Insurance information.*
- *The procedures for handling change orders.*
- *Lien releases to ensure you aren't liable for third party claims of nonpayment.*
- *Details on issues like access to your home, care of the premises and trash removal.*

Read your contract carefully, and review it with your remodeler to clarify any wording you don't understand. When you have answers to all of your questions, you're ready to sign the contract and start your project.

*Information used in this article provided by the National Association of Home Builders Remodelers™ Council.*

For helpful information on planning your project, please visit the following sites:

**[www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org)** *(National Association of Home Builders)*  
**[www.energystar.gov/products/windows](http://www.energystar.gov/products/windows)**  
**[www.efficientwindows.org](http://www.efficientwindows.org)**  
**[www.andersenwindows.com](http://www.andersenwindows.com)**



See your dealer for more information that will guide you in getting the home you want.