

12 questions to ask before you sign with a builder

Most people build a home once. Your builder has done it a thousand times. These are the twelve questions that change the answer you get. Written by a licensed builder with 130+ homes built, and a contract specialist with 400+ contracts managed.

How to use this: print it, take it to your next builder meeting, and write their answers straight onto it. If a builder won't answer one of these in writing, that itself is the answer.

MONEY — WHAT'S REALLY INCLUDED

1 What is specifically excluded from this quote?

Quotes compete on what's in them. The gap between two builders is usually what's left out.

THEIR ANSWER

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2 Which items are allowances rather than fixed prices, and what happens if I go over?

An allowance is a guess, not a price. This is where budgets quietly blow out by tens of thousands.

THEIR ANSWER

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3 Are site costs fixed, or provisional pending soil and survey reports?

Provisional site costs are the single most common source of an unexpected five-figure bill.

THEIR ANSWER

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4 How are variations priced, and will I see the cost before work starts?

"We'll sort it out later" means you'll be told the price after you've lost the ability to say no.

THEIR ANSWER

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TIME — WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT SLIPS

5 What's the contract build time, and what counts as an allowable delay?

Broad delay clauses can stretch a "9 month" build well past a year with nothing owed to you.

THEIR ANSWER

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6 What do you pay me if you run over time?

If you're renting or paying interest during the build, this is real money out of your pocket.

THEIR ANSWER

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PEOPLE — WHO YOU'LL ACTUALLY BE DEALING WITH

7 How many builds are you running at once right now?

A stretched builder isn't dishonest — they're just not on your site this week.

THEIR ANSWER

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8 Who is my day-to-day contact, and how quickly do you reply?

The person who sold you the build is rarely the person who runs it. Meet the second one.

THEIR ANSWER

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9 Can I visit a build you have in progress right now?

A finished display home tells you nothing. A live site tells you how they actually work.

THEIR ANSWER

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10 Can I speak to two clients whose builds finished in the last six months?

Recent and finished. Hand-picked testimonials from three years ago aren't the same thing.

THEIR ANSWER

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PROTECTION — WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG

11 Am I allowed to bring in my own independent inspector at each stage?

A good builder says yes without hesitating. Hesitation here is worth paying attention to.

THEIR ANSWER

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12 What's covered by warranty, for how long, and who do I call?

Ask before handover, not six months later when a crack appears and nobody's answering.

THEIR ANSWER

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Five answers that should make you slow down

- "Don't worry about that clause, we never enforce it." . If it's never enforced, they can remove it.
- "We need your deposit today to hold that price." . Real pricing doesn't expire in an afternoon.
- "That's just a standard allowance." . Standard for who? Ask what it actually buys.
- "We'd prefer you didn't bring an inspector through." . There is no good version of this answer.
- "I'll confirm that verbally, no need to put it in writing." . Then it doesn't exist.

Got their answers? That's the easy part.

Knowing whether those answers are *good* is where most people come unstuck. Your Build Mentor takes you through all eight stages of a build, from Before Building to Post Handover, with someone to ask when you're not sure. Sign up at yourbuildmentor.com.au