



## 10 Tips for Hiring a Heating and Cooling Contractor

- 1. Study up:** Find out about license and insurance requirements for contractors in your state. And before you call a contractor, know the model of your current system and its maintenance history. Also make note of any uncomfortable rooms. This will help potential contractors better understand your heating needs.
- 2. Ask for referrals:** Ask friends, neighbors, and co-workers for contractor referrals. You can also contact local trade organizations for names of members in your area.
- 3. Call references:** Ask contractors for customer references and call them. Ask about the contractor's installation or service performance, and if the job was completed on time and within budget.
- 4. Find special offers:** A heating and cooling system is one of the largest purchases you'll make as a homeowner. Keep your costs down by checking around for available rebates on energy-efficient ENERGY STAR qualified heating and cooling equipment. Begin your search at [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).
- 5. Look for ENERGY STAR:** ENERGY STAR qualified products meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and offer significant long-term energy savings. Contractors should be able to show you calculations of savings for ENERGY STAR heating and cooling equipment.
- 6. Expect a home evaluation:** The contractor should spend significant time inspecting your current system and home to assess your needs. A bigger system isn't always better; a contractor should size the heating and cooling system based on the size of your house, level of insulation, and windows. A good contractor will inspect your duct system (if applicable) for air leaks and insulation and measure airflow to make sure it meets manufacturer's specifications.
- 7. Get written, itemized estimates:** When comparing contractors' proposals (bids), be sure to compare cost, energy efficiency and warranties. A lowest price may not be the best deal if it's not the most efficient because your energy costs will be higher.
- 8. Get it in ink:** Sign a written proposal with a contractor before work gets started. It'll protect you by specifying project costs, model numbers, job schedule and warranty information.
- 9. Pass it on:** Tell friends and family about ENERGY STAR. Almost one-quarter of households knowingly purchased at least one qualified product last year, and 71% of those consumers say they would recommend ENERGY STAR to a friend. Spread the word, and we can all make a big difference.
- 10. Get the ENERGY STAR Guide:** For complete information on keeping your home comfortable year-round, get the ENERGY STAR Guide to Energy Efficient Cooling and Heating. You can download it at our website [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) or by calling 1-888-STAR-YES (1-888-782-7937).

## Heating & Air Conditioning Installation Bid Comparison Checklist

When you purchase a new heating or cooling system, you expect high performance. Unfortunately, more than half of new systems in U.S. homes do not perform to their rated efficiency as a result of improper installation. In fact, improper installation can reduce performance by as much as 30%. This not only affects your utility bills, but can lead to a variety of comfort problems, including insufficient dehumidification, dust from leaking ductwork, and poor air distribution.

Ask the contractors bidding for your business if they follow ENERGY STAR Quality Installation Guidelines ([www.energystar.gov/qispec](http://www.energystar.gov/qispec)) to ensure that you are not buying just a piece of equipment but a property installed heating and cooling system that provides comfort and efficiency. Ask the following questions to each contractor:

Contractor A: Contact: _____ Phone: _____	Contractor B: Contact: _____ Phone: _____	Contractor C: Contact: _____ Phone: _____
---	---	---

<b>EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
Do you offer Energy Star qualified equipment?			
Will you measure my home and calculate the correct size for my equipment using Manual J? <sup>1</sup>			
Will you install a properly matched indoor coil and outdoor unit? <sup>2</sup> (AC & heat pump only)			
Will you test to determine the maximum system size that can be installed with my existing ductwork?			
Will you install new refrigerant lines rather than reusing existing lines?			
Will you install and help me to set up an ENERGY STAR qualified programmable thermostat(s) (if not already in use)?			
Will you consider if zoning, with separate temperature controls for different areas, would be appropriate for my home?			
Will you provide me with information on any local rebate programs for which I might be eligible?			
<b>DUCT WORK</b>			
Will you check for damage to existing ductwork and duct insulation, and make repairs if necessary?			
If insulating ducts, will you seal all duct seams first?			
Will you test to confirm that duct leakage does not exceed recommended levels? <sup>3</sup>			
<b>VERIFICATION AND MAINTENANCE</b>			
Will you show me how to replace the air filter(s) in my new system?			
After installation, will you leave all manuals with me and provide documentation of installation procedures, including Manual J calculations, AHRI certificate, and records of any measurements or testing?			
Do you offer third-party verification that my system was properly installed and set up?			
Will you confirm proper levels of refrigerant and airflow across the coil? (AC & heat pump only)			
<b>NOTES</b>			

<sup>1</sup>Proper equipment size is vital for maximizing efficiency and comfort. To size your new system, the contractor should calculate your home's heating and cooling loads using the Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) Manual J or equivalent.

<sup>2</sup>Your contractor should provide an Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Institute (AHRI) certificate to document that your system was properly matched.

<sup>3</sup>Duct sealing is essential to the operation of your heating and cooling system. In most cases, it is recommended that total duct leakage be no more than 20%.

