

Choosing a building practitioner

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Builders and tradespeople have a range of experience and qualifications, so make sure you get the right person for your project.

If your project is residential and affects the building's structure or weathertightness, it may be restricted building work. Licensed building practitioners (LBPs) must carry out or supervise this type of work. Read more at [restricted building work \(https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/planning-a-successful-build/scope-and-design/choosing-the-right-people-for-your-type-of-building-work/use-licensed-people-for-restricted-building-work/restricted-building-work/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/planning-a-successful-build/scope-and-design/choosing-the-right-people-for-your-type-of-building-work/use-licensed-people-for-restricted-building-work/restricted-building-work/).

Most plumbing, gasfitting and electrical work must be done by someone with the appropriate licence.

The key things are to:

- ask for references
- get more than one quote
- get a contract or at least an agreement in writing.

A builder won't be able to design restricted building work without the appropriate design licence, but it can be useful to involve your builder at the design stage. They often have practical solutions to the work and may be able to indicate if the design's on track with your budget.

If you don't need a building consent, or the work is not restricted building work, you can still use an LBP to do the work.

[Check if you need a consent \(https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/planning-a-successful-build/scope-and-design/check-if-you-need-consents/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/planning-a-successful-build/scope-and-design/check-if-you-need-consents/)

Finding tradespeople

All licensed building practitioners are listed in the LBP public register. If they are not registered, they are not a government-licensed practitioner.

LBPs are carpenters (builders), roofers, brick and blocklayers, external plasterers, designers, site and foundation specialists.

You could start looking by:

- searching the [licensed building practitioner \(LBP\) register \(https://lbp.ewr.govt.nz/publicregister/search.aspx\)](https://lbp.ewr.govt.nz/publicregister/search.aspx) on the LBP website
- asking friends and family
- going through a professional trade organisation
- asking your designer or project manager for recommendations.

All LBPs carry a licence (or licences) for a particular class of work.

To be on the register, a tradesperson will have undergone a robust application process which includes written and verbal testing, and confirmation of their work by referees.

They have to do continuous skills maintenance testing, and every two years their competency will be reassessed. Currently, LBPs must obtain a certain amount of skills maintenance and on-the-job learning to keep their licence.

The following professionals have their own registration systems, and are not listed on the LBP register but are deemed to hold licences in certain classes:

- architects ([New Zealand Registered Architects Board \(http://www.nzrab.org.nz/\)](http://www.nzrab.org.nz/))

- engineers ([Engineering New Zealand \(https://www.engineeringnz.org/\)](https://www.engineeringnz.org/))
- plumbers and gasfitters ([Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board \(http://www.pgdb.co.nz/\)](http://www.pgdb.co.nz/))
- electricians ([Electrical Workers Registration Board \(https://ewrb.ewr.govt.nz/PublicRegister/Search.aspx\)](https://ewrb.ewr.govt.nz/PublicRegister/Search.aspx))

Certified or Registered Master Builders

If you are looking to hire a builder, you can check the New Zealand Certified Builders Association (NZCB) or the Registered Master Builders Association (RMBA) as an addition to the LBP online register.

These associations set their own requirements and rules for their members, such as meeting specific qualifications and criteria.

Keep in mind that unless they are a licensed practitioner, they must not undertake any restricted building work.

[New Zealand Certified Builders Association \(http://www.certified.co.nz/\)](http://www.certified.co.nz/)

[Registered Master Builders Association \(http://www.masterbuilder.org.nz/\)](http://www.masterbuilder.org.nz/)

Get quotes

You should present your project to at least three contractors and review all quotes before you sign an agreement with one. Ask for a detailed quote and not just an estimate for your building work.

A quote is based on specifications and is the price you are likely to pay to complete the building work. Quotes take a lot of time and effort to prepare. Most quotes include:

- a breakdown of labour and materials
- disposal (and its cost) of work
- inclusion of equipment and scaffolding hire
- notes on manufactured elements, such as trusses.

You will need to give the contractor a copy of the detailed drawings and specifications if you have them, as well as information about the building site.

When you compare the quotes, be sure you compare like for like. Check any materials specified to be sure they will result in a finish you will be happy with. Look carefully at whether subcontractors' work has been accounted for. Will there be extra costs to pay?

[Tenders and quotes \(https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/planning-a-successful-build/scope-and-design/choosing-the-right-people-for-your-type-of-building-work/tenders-and-quotes/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/planning-a-successful-build/scope-and-design/choosing-the-right-people-for-your-type-of-building-work/tenders-and-quotes/) has more information.

[Why contracts are valuable \(https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/why-contracts-are-valuable/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/why-contracts-are-valuable/) shows what a contract should contain and sets out the types of contract you can have with your builder:

- full contract
- labour-only contract
- managed labour-only contract.

The type of contract you get is important for quotes and understanding your level of involvement.

Communicate with potential contractors

Before you decide on your main contractor, discuss your project with them to see whether they will be a good fit.

This includes:

- who your design professional or project manager is (if you have one)
- your budget
- your ideas and goals
- start and end dates
- whether your job involves restricted building work – you will need to check their licence class

- whether or not they are a current LBP, and for which licence class
- what you expect the builder's role to be, which may or may not include:
 - basic drawings and designs
 - consent application
 - hiring sub-tradespeople
 - organising inspections
- particulars of the contract, such as the payment schedule
- whether you intend to live or work on site during the build
- whether you want to use any recycled materials.

You can also ask them about their skills, experience, qualifications and insurance. If your project is \$30,000 or more (including GST), they must give you a disclosure statement with this information in it (you can ask for one even if your building work will cost less).

However, you should still talk to them before you sign a contract. You could:

- ask to see past examples of their work
- arrange to talk to a selection of people who have used them before to check
 - communication skills
 - reliability and integrity
 - quality of workmanship
 - whether there were any variations to the consent
- inquire about their skill level, experience and qualifications
- check what type of insurance they have, and what this means for your project
- ask if they have experienced delays in previous projects, and the cause of those delays
- if they are not an LBP, find out how any restricted building work will be supervised
- ask if they are a member of NZCB or RMBA.

Most tradespeople will have a pool of sub-tradespeople they work with regularly and trust. Make sure your contract contains information about your main contractor's role in hiring sub-trades.

Hiring your contractor

It is a good idea to get an agreement in writing regardless of the size or cost of the work. If your project will be cost \$30,000 or more (including GST), there are consumer protection measures for your designer and builder to fulfil and you must have a contract with them.

The contract must cover everything your contractor will be involved in over the duration of the project, as well as any materials that will be used and the cost of labour.

Make sure you understand the contract you are signing, preferably getting your lawyer to check it before you sign.

You will need a separate contract with any other tradespeople working on your project and contracting directly to you.

Why contracts are valuable (<https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/why-contracts-are-valuable/>)

- with compliance with the Building Act, it is published under section 175 of the Building Act
- with a Weathertight Services claim, it is published under section 12 of the Weathertight Homes Resolution Services Act 2006.