UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Do It Yourself *vs* Hiring a Contractor Checklist

Family and Consumer Sciences, Universal Design, The Ohio State University

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Do-it-Yourself (DIY) projects can be a way to save money, however sometimes attempting to do the job yourself can create potential problems. Use this quick self-check before deciding to hire a contractor or tackle the project yourself. If you answer no to two or more in any section, consider hiring a professional.

Scope and skills

Do you fully understand the project scope and each step involved?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you already have the carpentry, plumbing, electrical, or finishing skills required?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Are you able to learn necessary skills before starting?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you enjoy doing do-it-yourself projects?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Tools, support, and planning

Do you have the necessary tools (or reliable access via rental/borrowing) and know how to use them safely?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you have someone experienced you can consult if issues develop mid-project?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you have a step-by-step written plan including timeline?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Materials and logistics

Do you know exactly which materials and quantities you need (including fasteners, anchors, sealants)?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Can you obtain quality materials at a reasonable cost and on the needed timeline?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Are you able to haul materials or can they be delivered?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Are the chosen products compatible with existing surfaces, waterproofing, and code requirements?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Time, disruption, and household impact

Do you have the time and physical ability to complete the project?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Have household members agreed to the noise, mess, dust, and access limits during the project?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you have a backup plan if the project takes longer or reveals hidden issues?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Safety and code triggers

Will mistakes risk falls, leaks, electrical hazards, or structural damage? If yes, lean contractor.
Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you know the local building codes and if any project permits or inspections are required (e.g., electrical, plumbing, structural)?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Could DIY work void product warranties or affect home insurance coverage?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Remember several factors go into determining whether to tackle a project yourself or not. The decision should not only be based on saving money, but other things should also be assessed including budget, timeline, skill level, project's complexity and possible repair costs if something goes wrong.

Revised by Lorrissa Dunfee, Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences, The Ohio State University Extension Belmont County

Sources:

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