

Professional contractors always work with a thorough written contract that includes a detailed project plan and specifies exactly what you and your contractor have agreed to. A contract is the best way to protect yourself and to ensure things go as planned — in fact, it's a valuable part of what a professional contractor provides.

What kind of contract do you need? For a minor home repair, like replacing a kitchen faucet, a simple work order may be adequate. For more substantial repairs, such as roof re-shingling, you'll want detail on the materials to be used and on the contractor's warranty. For complex repairs, renovations and custom home construction, the contract can become fairly lengthy and will need to include full plans and specifications.

Developing a Complete Contract

How do you develop a contract that meets the needs of both you and your contractor?

Usually, your contractor will prepare a standard draft contract for you to review. Read through this document carefully to ensure it accurately reflects what you want. If your project is high value or complex, you may also want a lawyer to review the draft contract. If you don't agree with or understand aspects of the draft, or if details are missing, discuss and resolve this with the contractor before you sign the contract.

What is a good contract? Essentially, a contract is good if it treats both parties fairly. You want assurance you'll get what you agreed to, on the schedule agreed to, at the price agreed to. Contractors want their obligations clearly spelled out, and assurance that you will pay in full and on time.

Essential Contract Information

Most contracts include at least two kinds of information. First, the contract defines what you and the contractor have agreed to. This includes basic information such as:

- who the contractor is
- what the contractor is responsible for doing, what work you will do yourself or have another contractor do
- who is responsible for obtaining necessary building permits and inspections
- when the work will be done (start and estimated completion dates)
- how much you will pay the contractor for the work
- when payments are to be made
- what warranty the contractor provides for the work

Second, the contract addresses what happens if there is an accident or if the contractor fails to conduct business properly. To achieve this, the contract should specify that your contractor:

- has adequate business liability insurance
- is enrolled in your province's Workers' Compensation program, or if exempt, carries equivalent private disability insurance
- has a Business or GST/HST Number
- has a license number if your municipality requires contractors to be licensed

When in doubt, hire a Kijenga Certified Pro as we verify their credentials for you.