

# How to Find a Reputable Plumber

No one likes calling in a plumber. The work they do is expensive, and it always seems to cost more than quoted and take a longer time than promised. Plus, much like car repair shops, most people do not really understand the work a plumber is doing. It is extremely easy for a plumber to rip off a homeowner and overcharge them for work that did not really need to be done in the first place. There have been many documented cases of just such a thing happening. But sometimes, you simply have to call in a plumber to do some work. How can you be sure you are working with someone who is honest and knows what they are doing? Here are the things you need to know before you choose a plumber for your job.

The first thing you need to do is check out how satisfied customers have been with a plumber's work in the past. Asking around in your neighbourhood and among your friends is a good way to start. Many of them will be able to recommend plumbers that they like as well as letting you in on some plumbing horror stories. Do not go by who has the most advertisements or who has been in business the longest. Unfortunately, many people go to a plumbing firm because they know they name from advertisements, and often these companies are the worst ones out there. The same thing happens with a company that has been in business for a long time. Name recognition does not mean good service in every case. A good plumber or plumbing company should be able to provide you with references upon request. If you are planning on hiring a plumber for a remodelling job rather than a simple repair, you should never accept a company that refuses to provide you with a set of references.

The internet can also be your friend in checking out plumbers. Many homeowners who have been burned by bad service maintain websites where they call out service people who have done bad work or ripped them off. Check these sites in your town and avoid the plumbers on those lists.

Hourly rates are another thing you want to check out before you hire a plumber. Call around and get a few quotes for a job. Find out if the plumber is willing to sign a quote and give you a price guarantee before he begins working. You should also find out if the plumber will charge you travel time to and from your job and how they will calculate that time and prove it to you. Giving you an exact price may be tough, but any plumber who can't give you a thorough explanation of how you will be billed with a ballpark figure of the price should be avoided.

## 7 Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Plumber

Are you licensed?

You should ask this question of the individual or the company that hires the plumber. Sometimes you get a handy man that knows some plumbing work who now calls himself a plumber. You want to avoid these types because you are not sure of the quality of work that will be done.

What are all the fees in the estimate?

Some plumbers offer a free estimate. Be careful about taking the offer. Sometimes the "free" estimate is only free when you actually hire the plumber. If you don't, you will be required to pay for the work done to make the estimate. Read the fine print before signing any documents.

Are you insured?

Accidents happen and that is the reason why plumbers should be insured. The professional plumber that takes his business seriously will be insured against any accidents that may happen while at your home.

What are your service rates?

Make sure you when you get a quote from the plumber, you read all the items listed and know what you are paying for. Is the service included as well as the purchase of parts? Where will the parts be brought from? Do not hesitate to ask the plumber to clear up doubts you might have on the quote

Do you charge for overtime or travel time?

When you call a plumber, you might be charged a call out rate. Find out if the plumber is located far away from your home and ask how long it will take to get to your home. You should also find out if the call-out rate is higher on weekends and late evenings.

What is your response time once a call is placed?

This question is geared towards having a long term relationship with your plumber. If you run a restaurant or a bar, you might need the services of a plumber often. You want to know that your plumber is very responsive when you need him

Do you have any references?

A good plumber will have done many jobs. Ask for references from him or ask your friends or family to refer a plumber to you. Another way to do that is check on his website to see if you can see any examples of satisfied customers

## How much can you expect to pay a Plumber

You probably have a leak or something is wrong with the plumbing in your house. Now you need a plumber but good plumbers are hard to find.

You might have been burned by a previous bad experience.

What you pay for your plumber's service will depend on what you need fixed. Plumbers charge between £70 - £250 for common repairs and fixes.

Here are some quotes for some common jobs you would need a plumber to do.

- Repair (Valve) £71
- Gas safety check £63
- Repair (Burst pipes) £222
- Service (Boiler) £63
- Central heating £202

### Simple Plumbing Repairs: DIY Fixes for your Plumbing Woes

A plumbing disaster has a way of coming at you on all fronts. Not only is it annoying and disruptive to your household, it often damages your property. Then, to top it all off, you have to call out a plumber. Plumbers are expensive anyway, but of course, no plumbing emergency ever happens during regular business hours. You can rest assured your plumbing nightmare will begin whenever the emergency surcharges are the highest.

Wouldn't it be nice to avoid all of the hassle and the expensive? Well, you can. By learning a few simple plumbing do it yourself repairs, you can save time, money and headache. You can intervene in the plumbing problem before your walls are destroyed or your carpets flooded, and of course, you'll never have to call a plumber out in the middle of the night again. Here are a few simple tricks you can use to fix your plumbing headaches yourself.

Draining your whole plumbing system: it definitely sounds like a job for a professional, right? Well, you can easily do this yourself, should you need to drain your system because of a water hammer problem or to make other repairs. First, you need to shut off the water at the central water meter in your home. Locate the meter – you'll see a one valve on the side of the meter attached to the pipes that lead into your home and one on

the side that leads outside. Shut off the valve leading to the outside. Now, go into your home, and starting at the highest level of the house, turn on all of the sink faucets. After you have worked your way to the bottom of the house, go to the top and repeat the process with the showers. Last but not least, repeat again, this time flushing the toilets from top to bottom. By the time you finish the process, all the water should have drained from the system and there should be no water running from the taps. Now you're ready to make other repairs.

What about that most common of plumbing problems – a clogged toilet or drain? First, give chemical treatments a try, as long as you don't have a septic system. Many of these treatments are identical to what a plumber would use to fix the problem and they will work for you, too – at a fraction of the price. If that doesn't work, a drain snake inserted down the toilet/drain will dislodge the blockage and you will be good to go.

One word of warning – always err on the side of caution. Don't take on a repair that is over your head to try and save a few dollars. Chances are that you'll end up digging yourself in deeper and paying a lot more than you would have had you called the plumber out in the first place.

## Top Ten Plumbing Checks Every Homeowner Needs to Know

Forewarned is forearmed, particularly when it comes to plumbing. Repairs can be quite costly so it is important for you and everyone in your home to know a few plumbing basics which can save you time and money down the road. Even children as young as five can learn a few plumbing tips! Here are the top ten plumbing checks every homeowner needs to know:

1. Plumbing emergencies may require quick thinking and movement on your part or that of a family member. Everyone in your home should know where the main cutoff for the water is, just in case.

2. Learn how to read your water meter. When no one else is home and you know there is no water running, check your meter to ensure none of the dials are moving. If they are, then you may likely have a water leak somewhere. Toilets and faucets are the most likely culprits and can add a few hundreds dollars a year to your water bill.

3. Check for toilet leaks by inserting a few drops of food coloring in the tank. About 20 minutes later, check the toilet bowl for any presence of color. If you do see something, there may be seepage around the flapper valve. It is an easy fix as long as you know there is a problem.

4 Try to drain a few gallons of water from your hot water heater tank twice a year. This ensures the valve works and also allows sediment accumulating at the bottom of the tank to clear out, maximizing heating efficiency. Better yet, if you have the funds invest in a tankless water heater and watch your utility bills lower because no energy is spent keeping gallons and gallons of water hot in a storage tank. A tankless water heater heats water on demand, when you need it.

5 When you toilet looks like it might overflow, remove the tank lid and press down on the flush valve, effectively plugging the hole at the bottom of the tank. This prevents the toilet from overflowing while you determine the source of the clog causing the problem.

6. Keep all water and drain valves operational by opening and closing them at least twice a year. If you do not do this, a valve may freeze up over time. So if you are caught in a plumbing dilemma and cannot turn the valve off, you could be facing serious problems and expense.

7. Learn where the stop valves are for the faucets and toilets in your home. This allows you to turn off water at the problem source rather than inconvenience an entire household by turning off the main valve to the house.

8. Keep a plunger around for clogged sinks and toilets as they are effective tools for plumbing issues.

9. Invest in a few replacement parts such as a toilet kit and rubber gaskets for those simple plumbing fixes around the home.

10. Avoid chemical drain cleaners for removing clogs. Instead use a plunger or invest in a roto rooter tool called an auger, nickname "snake," for those tough obstructions in plumbing pipes.