

The Tough Six Questions

Here's what you ask every installer you get to talk to:

Say, **I've heard about all the problems with installation and I want to make sure mine gets done right. Can I ask you some questions?**

You should hear a "YES" for each question below:

1 Do you do your own work? You need to hear "yes" or you're wasting your time asking him anymore questions. Most installers lose interest real fast when they hear that you expect him to be on the job from start to finish. It's just as well. There's plenty of **top installers** who do their own work. You need accountability. You need an individual.

2. Do you use a power stretcher? It's required. Some guys let their helper do the power stretching so they can focus on seaming, and that's OK, but you've got to hear a resounding "YES!" "We power stretch everything we do! Every room. Every job."

3. Do you do your own seams? Most installers will dodge this question but the **top installers** don't mind talking about it. Listen closely and you'll be able to tell from their response whether they take pride in their seaming or not.

4. Will you come and meet me and look at my job? Most installers will say "yes" to this question. Naturally, they want to 'see' what they're getting into rather than have to go off of some salesman's notes. Avoid any installer who doesn't want to see the job ahead of time. **BE SPECIFIC ABOUT THE DRAWING.** Ask: **Will you give me a Drawing?** It's a requirement of CRI-105. Avoid installers who want to just fly all over your house with a tape measure then shout out a price at you. That's all you get for a bid. You don't want these guys. You want a drawing and a plan!

5. What if you mis-measure? Will you pay for the mistake? They'll usually say, "Oh, I hardly ever do that." So you say, **OK, so you won't mind paying for it if you do, right?** He better say, "yes" because he's gonna have to sign your **Installation Agreement** to get the job.

6. Do you give a lifetime labor warranty? Again, you only want to hear, "Yes." Don't let them confuse the issue with the Manufacturer's Warranty. Manufacturers don't warrant labor. Installers do. You want to know if he gives a lifetime warranty against wrinkles. It's either Yes or No! The only exception is the material itself. Some is of such low quality – too much filler in the backing – that, it's not gonna hold up. So some guys say, "well if you pick a quality carpet and get the pad I recommend then I'll guarantee that you won't get wrinkles." That's a fair statement. It's not his fault if you buy crap.

These are the six critical questions you must get a 'yes' to before you invite any installer over.

Here's some secondary questions you can ask that will further refine your list:

Secondary Questions

7. How old are you? Most **average installers** are worn out by the time they're 30. It's because they refuse to use the power stretcher. However, most **top installers** don't even hit their prime until about 35. Unfortunately, even the best installers are pretty much done by the time they're 55. Their wives call them dinosaurs, but I'd give them the job any day over a guy under 30. So use age as a filter: **You want a guy over 35.**

8. How much notice do you need? **Top installers** are usually booked out about 10 working days. Still, you want the guy who is busy. The only time a **top installer** isn't busy is in late winter.

9. Which Retailers do you install for? I've never known a **top installer** (much less a **high-end installer**) who works for Retailers. It's too hard to get good at this trade to give away your skill to a Retailer. An honest installer will probably say, "Uhhhh, I don't work for any retailers ... anymore ..."

10. How much do you charge? A good way to weed-out **average installers** is to see if they'll discount their price for labor. Say, **I got another bid for \$1 less, per yard. Will you match that price?** If he says, "Sorry, no can do," **he might be your guy!** It's contrary to what you might think is the right response, but it's what you need to hear. **You don't want a guy who needs the work.** A tradesman who holds firm on his rate is telling you he's good, and he's ready to prove it. Just pay his rate, and you'll have every right to expect quality workmanship.

That's it. Ten questions that will find you one of the best installers in your town.

Notice, **price** and **references** are not in the top six questions. Here's why not:

Price is irrelevant if you're looking for **value**. Wait until you find a guy who says "Yes" six times then ask his price.

References: I recommend that people not even get into references. You'll hardly ever get to the truth. It's just too hard to get past consumer (ignorant) opinions, misinformation, lies, deception, and politics. Just focus on the six tough questions and you'll find your guy.

My service checks references, but we have a lot of experience doing it. I try to get them to go 5 to 10 years back but most guys won't look it up. Even when they do, most of their customers have moved.

Courtesy

Ever notice how it's the overly-friendly and too-courteous waitress who screws up your order? In any kind of service, you want the person who's focused on the job at hand. So don't let it bother you that the installers who answer 'yes' to the tough six may not be all that cordial. The best service people are just that way. We're matter-of-fact people, with take-it-or-leave-it attitudes. Please forgive us for being focused. The main thing to get is a "yes" for each of the Tough Six Questions.

Bottom-line: Either be prepared to do the work it takes to find a **top installer**, or pay me to do it. Or be prepared for looseness. Ask the tough questions and you'll find your guy. If you get lazy (hire a retailer), you'll likely get a lazy installation. It doesn't cost anymore to get a top installer - just pay him direct, then hold him accountable. The most you should pay is what **top installers** charge. Don't even get into price except with those who answer "yes" to the tough six. On average, you'll find about one **top installer** for every thirty installers you screen.

YOU CAN DO THIS.

Once you do, you're ready to invite him over for the **Meeting of the Minds**.