

# 7 Essential Questions to ask

***This guide will save you a lot of headaches, time and money!***

It can be a daunting task trying to decide which business you should hire to install, repair and/or refinish your floors.

Through my years of experience and fixing some total disasters caused by so-called “specialists” I have put together a guide for my customers to help them select the best possible wood floor contractor.

This guide will take you through the questions you should be asking to ascertain if you are dealing with a reputable flooring contractor. Remember con-men are just that – they are convincing and amicable, but hopefully these questions should eliminate them from your life and the dangers they pose to your beautiful wooden floors.

Armed with this valuable information, you’ll be able to choose a company that you feel very comfortable working with and can trust. One you can be sure will listen you, offer expert advice and carry out works without the hassles and headaches that can come with refurbishment works.

## **1. Detailed Quotation in writing**

Don’t accept a sheet of paper with a price on it but no details or worse still, a verbal quote. This is a sure sign of potential frustrations if there is a disagreement down the road. Make sure everything you’ve asked for is written in the quotation. If it’s not in the quotation there’s a good chance it won’t be included. An estimator from a professional business will always take the time to sit down and write a detailed but easy to read and understand quotation. It should explain exactly what is included, what preparations you need to do and what can be realistically expect from your floors.

## **2. Home Address and Landline number**

It may seem obvious but you really don’t know who you are letting into your home. So called “guarantees” are irrelevant if you cannot locate the person again. All business letter heads must have the director’s names by law, if they are a limited company. If a sole trader, look for their home address and if available, a landline number. This offers a level of comfort that you are dealing with a long-term, reliable company who are not afraid to give their home address i.e. they intend to be around for a long time. You also know where to find them if something goes wrong.

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### **RH Wood Floors Ltd**

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### 3. **Public Liability Insurance**

It's a fact of life that things can and do go wrong from time to time, no matter how competent the company and its workers are. You need to make sure you will be financially protected for any damage or accidents that may occur. Make sure your floor refinisher has proper, up-to-date Public Liability insurance that will cover your property from fire, water and other damage. A reputable company will have this to hand and can give a copy upon request. Don't take chances with companies that will "forward" the insurance later, you may well forget and then be left dealing with a company whose ethic is to take their chances in your property!

Their Public Liability Insurance level should be €5m. This is the level to carry out government contract works which is further evidence of a reputable company. Don't take your chances with a company that has inadequate coverage, if there is any question whatsoever about the coverage or the validity, run away and find another company! The risk is simply not worth taking.

### 4. **Tax Clearance Certificate**

Without this being readily available you are probably dealing with a "here today, gone tomorrow" cowboy. Same as insurance, if it's not available they are not reputable . . . don't let them inside your door.

### 5. **Specific Wood Floor Training**

The wooden floors in your home are worth a lot of money. An inexperienced contractor can very quickly do a lot of permanent damage. I've seen way too many jack-of-all-trades destroying wooden floors in their wake for a so called good-price. Think about the hassle and how much it would cost to replace your wood floors! *Do you really want an inexperienced contractor in your house?*

Wood Flooring is a very fine art, requires a high degree of attention to detail and takes a good number of years to perfect. Carpentry, by its very nature, has a wide spectrum, from shuttering with 6 inch nails and a tolerance to the closest inch, to joinery shops that work to the millimetre. You need to ensure that you are dealing with a wooden floor specialist and not a general carpenter.

If they have a long term commitment then they should have sought specialist training and be able to provide certificates from a recognised organisation.

### 6. **References**

As a homeowner, you want an established company that has been working in the field for years. It is very important to find a company that has built a solid reputation and exhibits a good track record for multiple clients – domestic, pubs & restaurants, sports floors and commercial buildings. Ask the company for references. There should be tonnes of them. A reputable contractor should be also able to arrange a call to a previous client, although this may take a few minutes as nobody likes a call out of the blue from a stranger asking questions.

### 7. **Maintenance**

Many old houses in Ireland still have wood floors that were installed over 100 years ago. While linoleum and carpets last maybe 10 years, and wood laminate can last 8-10, real wood is virtually ageless. You just have to know how to take care of it.

Keeping your floor clean is good advice, but not specific enough. You need to know

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what kind of cleaners and devices will nourish or harm your wood. You've got to deal with spills, with pets, with high heels, and with humidity in just the right way. You've got to protect your floor with the right kind of rugs and mats in the right places. And you need to be able to call the company that installed or refinished your floor to ask questions and get recommendations without worrying that they'll just sell you an unnecessary refinishing job.

All types of wood are different, and require different types and schedules of care. You need a wood floor expert, not just to give you information up front, but also to support you to keep your floors beautiful for the life of your house.

All contractors should have detailed care instructions, and welcome your questions for as long as you have them.

Yours sincerely,

*Russell O'Halloran*

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