

Asphalt Installation Estimate Checklist

Experienced, ethical, and reliable asphalt contractors can be difficult to come by. As someone who has spent nearly three decades in the industry and almost 2 decades running AllAboutDriveways.com, I've interacted with thousands of contractors from all over the country. Unfortunately, many of them prioritize profits over quality workmanship and avoid accountability at all costs.

As you go through this checklist, you'll gain a comprehensive understanding of asphalt and may even impress some contractors with your knowledge. However, some contractors may be intimidated by your level of expertise, choose not to provide an estimate and walk away from the opportunity. Don't let this discourage you - it's their loss, not yours. With my comprehensive list of questions, you can weed out the dishonest and unethical contractors, leaving only the best in the field.

Honest and ethical companies will have no problem answering your questions. Remember that. If you take this list seriously, I assure you that it will be well worth the investment of your time. Let's get started:

#1) Always get at least 2 to 3 estimates!

Always get at least 2 to 3 estimates before making any decisions on whom to choose for your project. Of all of the complaints I receive about contractors, they usually start off with "The contractor told me we'll give you a great deal if we can get started today"! And most of the time... that was the only estimate they acquired! So don't make this mistake of only getting 1 estimate.

#2) Is the company a member of AllAboutDriveways.com?

If they say yes:

Don't just take their word for it! Visit our website at <https://www.allaboutdriveways.com/pros/> and verify they are in fact a member! Search for their company by their phone number. Be sure their company name and phone number matches EXACTLY what's on our website. There should be no variation of their name in any way. As an example, we had a member whose company name was "xxxxxx Asphalt & Concrete **Specialists**" and a company who claimed they were a member said they were "xxxxxx Asphalt & Concrete **Services**". Unfortunately... that homeowner ended up losing over \$6K! Had the homeowner verified the company's membership, they would have easily identified they were **not** a member of AllAboutDriveways.com! **If they do not appear in search results... they are NOT a member!!**

If the Company is in fact a verified member:

I take what I do very seriously. **I will NEVER recommend a company I don't trust on my referral list! PERIOD!**

If the company that has given you an estimate is listed as one of my Official Registered Members, I trust them and I KNOW YOU CAN TOO! If any of the companies that have provided you with an estimate are in fact a verified member... **there is no need to put them through the scrutiny of the rest of this checklist!**

Why not? See what contractors must endure to be listed as one of my Official

Members! Go to: <https://www.allaboutdriveways.com/contractor-screening-process/>

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If the company is NOT a member:

Be sure to add a checkmark to each and every question on this list! Don't feel uncomfortable asking these questions and don't let ANY CONTRACTOR intimidate you or make you feel as if you're being too picky! It's YOUR hard earned money that you're spending on your driveway. You have every right to do your due diligence! Be sure to also watch my video series "The Asphalt Paving Scams Playbook: How to Outsmart Dishonest Asphalt Paving Contractors and Protect Your Hard-Earned Money".

Go to: <https://www.allaboutdriveways.com/asphalt-driveways/asphalt-paving-scams/>

#3) How long has the company been in business?

This is a great question to ask, but by no means should you just take their word for it. There are plenty of companies out there who claim to have been in business for much longer than they actually have been. They know that credibility is important, so **they will often give the length of time they've been in the industry as their answer.** For example, they might say that they've been in the business for 15 years, when in reality they've only been in business under a certain name for a short time. In today's age, a little bit of investigation online can reveal whether they're telling the truth or not. Do they have a website? Can you find reviews about their company, and if you can, do the phone numbers match?

On the other hand, just because a company is new does not necessarily mean that they are inexperienced or untrustworthy. At least one year in business is one of our requirements to list a company on our website. Consider making that one of your rules as well.

#4) Is the contractor/company supplying you with a written proposal?

I can't tell you how many times I've had a homeowner contact me to complain about their contractor, only to find out that they have nothing in writing. To ensure that you're protected, it's important to not accept anything other than a clear and concise proposal that has all aspects of the job described in detail. This proposal should be printed and signed by both you and the contractor before any work begins. Everything discussed should be specified on the agreement or added as an addendum.

Verbal agreements should not be accepted. With a written agreement, the contractor knows exactly what is expected and you know exactly what you're receiving and the price you're paying. Typed up emails should not be considered as valid agreements. Reputable companies will provide a written proposal on company letterhead. In addition to protecting you, written proposals also help compare bids from other contractors for a fair comparison of services.

#5) Will the contractor/company be subcontracting the entire job, parts of the job, 1 part of the job or is the job performed all "in house"?

While on rare occasions a reputable contractor or company may have to subcontract a specialized portion of a job, it's never a good idea to do business with a company that subcontracts the entire job or the majority of the job. If issues arise, it can be difficult to determine who's responsible and who will honor the warranty. No one wants to take responsibility for any mistakes or issues, leaving you with a problematic driveway and a warranty that may not actually exist.

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To avoid this, cut out the middleman and do business with companies that perform the work in-house with their own equipment and experienced employees. This ensures that there's a clear chain of responsibility and accountability, giving you peace of mind that the job will be done right and any issues will be addressed without unnecessary hassle.

Instances where an asphalt contractor may need to subcontract a portion of your job may be: Hiring laborers for unskilled labor work: Usually no more than 1 person, certainly not an entire crew. Any concrete work or landscaping. Sometimes a contractor may hire another company to perform milling or tar coating services.

#6) Will the contractor/company be grading the driveway prior to installing the asphalt?

Excavating & Fine Grading: While it's not uncommon for a contractor to pave a driveway in a single day, some may prioritize speed over quality to maximize profits. This can result in the driveway being inadequately graded, impacting water drainage and stability.

To ensure a proper installation, make sure that the contractor grades the driveway and installs a base material if necessary. The contractor should also specify the thickness of the base material being installed prior to adding the asphalt. It's important to remember that the quality of a driveway is directly tied to the quality of its base. By choosing a contractor who takes the time to grade and properly install a base material, you are investing in a driveway that will last for years to come.

#7) Will the contractor/company be applying a weed inhibitor down prior to installing the asphalt?

While not every area in the country requires a weed inhibitor, it's always a good practice to use one to minimize the growth of vegetation through the asphalt. When vegetation takes root under the asphalt, it can cause permanent damage that is difficult and costly to repair. Investing in a weed inhibitor is a proactive step that helps preserve the quality and longevity of your driveway, ultimately saving you time and money in the long run.

#8) Is the contractor/company indicating the area in square feet or square yards on the proposal?

It's important to know exactly what you're paying for when it comes to asphalt paving. If a contractor doesn't indicate the total area being paved in square feet or square yards on the proposal, it can be difficult to determine what you're getting. All proposals should specify the total area being paved in writing.

Don't allow a contractor to indicate vague areas such as "from the barn to the garage" or "from the garage to the street." Instead, all proposals should clearly indicate the total area being paved in either square feet or square yards. By having this information in writing, you can verify that you're paying for the exact amount of pavement needed for your project.

#9) Is the contractor/company indicating the compacted thickness of the asphalt?

THIS IS PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF YOUR PROPOSAL!

Make sure that the contractor has indicated in writing the compacted thickness of the asphalt! This refers to the thickness of the asphalt after it has been compacted with the rollers and the job is 100% completed. It's crucial to ensure that this thickness is indicated in writing on the proposal.

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After all of the equipment has been loaded and left the job what is the final thickness?

Be wary of vague indications like "2 to 3 inches" or simply "3 inches." To ensure that you're getting what you pay for, make sure the contractor specifies the compacted thickness of the asphalt **in writing**. Ask for the "compacted thickness" after completion, in writing, on the proposal! Do not variate from this. It's in writing on the proposal or they are not awarded the contract. PERIOD!

#10) How Will The Edges Of The Asphalt Be Finished?

There's 2 parts to the edges of the asphalt that need to be addressed.

- 1) The edge of the asphalt itself
- 2) The shoulder of the asphalt.

Will the asphalt contractor be compacting the edges? Un-compacted edges are acceptable, but knowing what you're getting is good so there are no surprises at the end. Not all contractors offer edge compaction. Some will charge an upgrade fee and others simply include it in their standard driveway installation process.

How will the asphalt contractor address the shoulder of the asphalt driveway? There should be a shoulder so that if you drive off of the edge of the asphalt, the edge of the asphalt doesn't crack or get smashed. Will they utilize the existing soil? [Watch my video "Asphalt Edges"](#) for a more clear understanding of this topic.

11) Does the contractor/company offer a warranty?

The industry standard for asphalt paving warranties is one year on both workmanship and materials. It's important to get any warranty offered by a contractor in writing on the proposal. However, it's equally important to remember that a warranty is only as good as the stability of the company offering it.

Before choosing a contractor, consider the stability and reputation of the company. What good is a warranty if the company is not financially stable enough to honor it if something goes wrong? To protect yourself, always do your research and choose a reputable, established company. A good contractor will stand by their work and offer a warranty.

12) Is the contractor/company trying to sell you an "added warranty"?

Some contractors may try to sell you an "added warranty" if you pay them an additional fee to seal the new asphalt driveway. This is acceptable as long as the contractor waits to seal the new asphalt until it has cured for at least 3 to 6 months. However, it is not acceptable for them to want to seal it immediately after paving. This is a scam and should not be entertained.

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New asphalt requires time to cure before it can be properly sealed. Curing takes a minimum of 3 to 6 months. If a contractor tells you they will seal it right away, this is a red flag and should be avoided. Don't fall victim to this scam! To ensure a quality driveway, always give new asphalt the time it needs to cure properly before having it sealed.

#13) Is the contractor/company requiring money down?

I'm not a fan of contractors asking for money up front AT ALL! Most reputable companies do not require payment prior to starting the job. However, there are some cases, such as in certain areas, where contractors and companies require a 50/50 split between a down payment and final payment on completion.

The ONLY way I would EVER give a company money up front is ONLY ONE WAY: Tell the contractor that the moment his trucks, employees and equipment arrive and begin unloading, you will pay them their required money down. Some contractors may be concerned that a check can be canceled. If that's the case, tell them you will pay them in cash with a signed receipt! **Be sure and get signed cash receipt!**

This way the company doesn't have to wait for a check to clear, they're comfortable with getting started and you're guaranteed they show up to do the job and don't take off with your money! There's virtually zero risk for either the contractor or yourself! That's it. No other way. PERIOD!

#14) How will you be required to make payment?

Is the contractor asking to be paid personally rather than a company name? Most complaints I receive about an unethical contractor inevitably the payment/check was made to a person rather than to a company. While this is not a sure sign of an unethical contractor, it should raise some red flags as it may mean they are likely not a registered business with the state! I would never do business with a company that is not a legitimately state registered company.

Notes:

**This checklist is a great way to help you get as good of a job as possible but is not meant to be a guarantee of protection against unethical contractors, substandard work or improperly performed services or sub-standard materials. Patrick Mattingley or AllAboutDriveways.com is not responsible for any losses incurred in any way by using this checklist guide.*