

What should I ask a prospective tile setter?

Article Number: 111 | Rating: 1/5 from 2 votes | Last Updated: Tue, Aug 30, 2016 at 12:09 PM

Q. I am going to be hiring a tile setter. What kinds of questions should I ask them? By the way, I am in California.

A. We asked our Installation Technical Director, Giovanni Lagana of Lagana Tile (www.laganatile.com), what a consumer should ask a prospective tile setter. This is what he said.

1. Verify the contractor has a C-54 specialty license, along with workers comp and general liability insurance and a local city business license.
2. Ask about work experience and verify references. If possible ask to do a walk-through of one of their jobs.
3. Ask them if they have ever performed similar types of installations in terms of both detail and type of materials you are looking to have installed.

Why? Because with all the different types of tile and stone that are out there, each one requires a separate skill level. For example, marble tiles vary in size and thickness and when an inexperienced installer tries to install them like a standard tile you end up with the infamous "lippage."

4. Ask them if they plan to "Float" or "Mud Set" the installation or will they use "CBU" which is a cement board underlayment.

Why? Because a traditional "Mud Man" has the advantage that he can make corrections on walls that are out of plumb, floors that are out of level or need to meet a specific elevation or wall thickness. This level of precision cannot be achieved using a CBU.

Finally, I will always offer to seal the finished grout for the homeowner. Especially on a new construction site by the time the other trades have been stomping over my work and spilled their coffee, its trashed and in need grout cleaning. Most of the time I find homeowners are so overwhelmed with a remodel they don't want to deal with grout sealing and appreciate the tile setter taking care of it.

Posted by: Debbie Shaw - Thu, Aug 21, 2008 at 6:02 AM. This article has been viewed 2275 times.

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