



Which Is Better: A Handyman Or Specialty Contractor?

The idea of hiring a HOC-authorized handyman to handle most repair projects appeals to many members. But that's not always the best approach.

There are a variety of reasons why members request the services of a HOC-authorized handyman. However, Club staff often find that a specialty contractor is the better option for many of these situations.

When you're considering hiring a handyman, ask yourself the following questions:

Does the project involve plumbing or electrical work?

If your project involves any electrical or plumbing work, only a Washington state-licensed plumber or electrician can perform the task. That's the law.

For your home to be considered safe, this work must be performed to standards established by state and federal authorities. And if a permit is required, only a contractor with the proper licensing will be allowed to obtain it.

To become licensed, plumbers and electricians have to complete a multi-year apprenticeship, work in the field for years, pass a state examination, plus attend continuing education to keep up with all the changing requirements.

Do you want a bid?

Unless it's an urgent repair (or a small, routine project), a specialty contractor will, after assessing the details of your project, usually provide you with a bid for the work. If you approve the bid, he and/or his crew will return to perform the work at a scheduled time. It's a two-step process that puts control in the member's hands, and often leaves them feeling more at ease.

However, handyman projects are typically too small to justify providing these estimates of time-and-material costs ahead of time. Usually, a handyman arrives on the scene tools-

in-hand, ready to get to work, and you pay him by the hour.

Do you mind paying more for the work to be done?

While a handyman may be able to tackle a wide variety of projects, the hourly rates most charge are higher than a specialty contractor's. Plus, a handyman's final bill will include any trips he has to make to buy materials or tools. And, it may take a handyman longer to do the work than it would an experienced specialty contractor (who is more likely to already have on-hand the proper tools and parts for the job).

Do you need the work done soon?

If no electrical or plumbing work is required, a handyman may be your best bet if your project is small and you need it completed right away.

If it's an urgent situation, plumbers and electricians will respond the same day. But most other specialty contractors will want to schedule your project for later.

Is it a small job?

The old handyman adage, "no job too small," still applies. If your project truly is minor, consider hiring a handyman. How can you gauge the realtive size of your project? Ask the Club staff.

Do you have a variety of tasks?

Many members would prefer to have a handyman take care of everything all at once, instead of coordinating tasks with multiple specialty contractors. If the work on your to-do list is all minor and matches the handyman's specific skill set, that's a good choice. However, depending on the type of project, the quality of the work may be better if you make the extra effort to hire multiple specialty contractors.

Helping you choose the right contractor is, of course, a Club specialty. If you're ever unsure about the type of contractor you need, just ask the staff.

