HVAC PROS — GUIDE

How to choose an HVAC contractor

Compare license evidence, written scopes and service records before approving heating or cooling work.

Updated November 10, 2026

Choose a contractor who can explain the diagnosis, show relevant license evidence and give a clear written scope. ENERGY STAR, 10 Tips for Hiring a Heating and Cooling Contractor, fetched 2026-11-10 recommends checking state license and insurance requirements, calling references, getting a home evaluation and comparing written, itemized estimates.

Start with the property and the problem

Record the equipment model and service history. Describe what changed and when. For seasonal maintenance, ask for the inspection checklist. For a breakdown, ask about diagnostic fees and attendance. For replacement, ask the contractor to inspect the property before recommending equipment.

A business should identify access restrictions, working hours and the person who can approve changes. Confirm whether the contractor serves that type of property and equipment. An address in your city does not establish service coverage or availability.

Verify before you commit

Ask for the legal business name, license number and issuing agency. Match those details to the official register. Use our license-check workflow to keep a record. Ask the insurer or agent to confirm insurance evidence.

For US refrigerant work, use the EPA certification requirements, fetched 2026-11-10, to ask about the attending technician's credential. EPA describes technician certification separately from local contractor licensing. Do not infer qualifications from a directory badge or a payment plan.

Ask references specific questions

ENERGY STAR recommends calling customer references and asking about installation or service performance, timing and budget. Ask whether the work resembled your project. Ask how the contractor handled a problem after completion. Keep your own notes instead of relying only on a rating summary.

Compare the written offers

Request the proposed work, exact equipment where relevant, labor, exclusions, currency, tax, schedule and warranty. Ask whether diagnostic charges are included. Ask how changes are authorized. Compare the same scope across contractors. ENERGY STAR cautions that the lowest price may not be the best deal when efficiency and operating costs differ.

For maintenance plans, compare visit work, renewal terms and repair charges. For installation, request startup records and instructions. For ductwork, ask which areas are included and how the contractor will describe the finished work.

Keep control of the decision

Ask for time to read the proposal. Get unclear promises in writing. Confirm who handles warranty calls and what happens if parts are delayed. Keep the signed scope, approved changes, service reports and final invoice together.

HVAC Pros lists information from public registers, member directories and business websites. We do not certify or recommend a contractor. Contact the contractor directly for current prices and availability. You can also answer a few questions to request a match. A match and a reply are not guaranteed.

Frequently asked questions

Does a paid listing prove trade competence?

No. Verify license and certification evidence with the relevant issuer.

What should I compare besides price?

Compare the diagnosis, work scope, equipment, exclusions, warranty and service arrangements in writing.