

HVAC UNFILTERED

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE SIGNING AN HVAC CONTRACT

Replacing a heating and cooling system can be one of the largest purchases you make for your home. Use these questions before signing a proposal. You are not trying to become an HVAC technician. You are making sure the contractor can clearly explain what you are buying, why it fits your home, and what is included.

■ 1. How did you determine the size of the system you're recommending?

Why it matters: Look for more than a rule of thumb based only on square footage. Ask whether the contractor considered insulation, windows, orientation, air leakage, ductwork and the home's actual heating and cooling needs.

■ 2. Can you show me the exact model numbers for every major piece of equipment?

Why it matters: Get the furnace, air conditioner or heat pump, indoor coil/air handler and thermostat model numbers in writing. This lets you verify efficiency, capacity, features and whether the equipment is a proper matched system.

■ 3. What will this system deliver at my home's design conditions?

Why it matters: Rated capacity on a brochure is not always what the equipment delivers on the hottest or coldest days. This is especially important with heat pumps and homes at higher elevations.

■ 4. Have you evaluated my ductwork and airflow?

Why it matters: Excellent equipment connected to inadequate ductwork can still be noisy, inefficient and uncomfortable. Ask about airflow, return-air capacity, supply duct sizing and expected static pressure.

■ 5. What efficiency level makes financial sense for my house?

Why it matters: Higher efficiency is not automatically the best investment. Ask the contractor to explain the additional installed cost, estimated energy savings and realistic payback instead of focusing only on the efficiency rating.

■ 6. What exactly is included in the quoted price?

Why it matters: Confirm permits, removal of old equipment, electrical work, gas piping, drain work, venting, thermostat, equipment pads, duct modifications, startup, commissioning and cleanup. Surprises love vague proposals.

■ 7. Which upgrades are necessary, and which are optional?

Why it matters: Separate required installation items from comfort upgrades and accessories. Ask what problem each upgrade solves and what happens if you don't buy it.

■ 8. What labor and equipment warranties am I receiving?

Why it matters: Manufacturer parts warranties and contractor labor warranties are different. Ask about registration requirements, exclusions, transferability and who pays diagnostic or trip charges.

■ 9. What rebates, tax credits or utility incentives might apply?

Why it matters: Programs change frequently. Ask which incentives the proposed equipment actually qualifies for and whether the quoted price assumes you will receive them. Verify eligibility before treating an incentive as guaranteed.

■ 10. How will you prove the system is operating correctly after installation?

Why it matters: Ask about startup measurements and commissioning. A quality installation should verify items such as airflow, temperature change, refrigerant operation, gas pressure/combustion where applicable and thermostat/control operation.

HVAC UNFILTERED RULE: A good contractor should be comfortable explaining the proposal in plain English. If you don't understand what you're buying, keep asking questions before you sign.

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Straight answers before you spend thousands.

Educational information only. Equipment selection, sizing and installation should be evaluated for the specific home and local requirements.