



MORAN CONSULTING

Questions to Ask a New Home Builder

Washington State Checklist

Bring this checklist to your first meeting with any Washington builder.

Check off each question as you ask it, and write down the answer you receive.

If an answer is vague or missing, that is a red flag worth reviewing before you sign.

How to use this checklist

1. Print one copy per builder you are comparing.
2. Ask every question on the list. The best builders answer without hesitation.
3. Write answers in the space provided, or attach a separate note sheet.
4. Compare responses side by side before you choose a contract or make a deposit.

Builder background and licensing

In Washington, general contractors must be registered with L&I. Confirm the basics before you talk price.

- ☐ What is your Washington L&I contractor registration number, and how long has it been active?
- ☐ How many homes have you built in this county in the last three years?
- ☐ Can I tour a home you finished 2-5 years ago, not just a current model?
- ☐ Who is the on-site superintendent, and how many active projects are they running?
- ☐ Are you a member of the local Master Builders Association (MBAKS, BIAW, etc.)?

Contract, price, and allowances

Most disputes trace back to vague contracts and thin allowances. Get specifics in writing.

- ☐ Is this a fixed-price, cost-plus, or guaranteed-maximum-price contract?
- ☐ What is included in the base price, and what is an allowance I'll likely exceed?
- ☐ How are allowance overages billed, and when are they due?
- ☐ What is your deposit schedule and draw schedule?
- ☐ What triggers a price escalation clause, and is there a cap?
- ☐ How are lumber, concrete, and material surcharges handled if costs rise mid-build?

Plans, specifications, and finishes

A complete spec sheet is the single best protection you have against surprise substitutions.

- ☐ Can I see a line-item spec sheet with brands, models, and grades for every finish?
- ☐ What is the standard insulation package, and does it exceed Washington energy code?
- ☐ What windows do you install, and what is the U-factor and SHGC?
- ☐ Are HVAC, plumbing, and electrical layouts shown on the plans I'll sign?
- ☐ How do you document changes to the plan after I sign?

Schedule, communication, and site access

- ☐ What is the realistic start-to-finish timeline, and what is the contractual completion date?
- ☐ How do you handle weather delays and supply-chain delays?
- ☐ How often will I get written progress updates, and through what tool?

- ☐ Can I walk the site during construction, and do I need to schedule it?
- ☐ Who is my single point of contact for questions and decisions?

Change orders and upgrades

- ☐ What is your change-order process, and what markup do you add?
- ☐ Is there a deadline after which changes are no longer accepted?
- ☐ Which upgrades are best done during construction vs. after closing?
- ☐ Do you offer a design center, and are prices there fixed or negotiable?

Quality, inspections, and third-party review

- ☐ May I hire an independent consultant or inspector at framing, pre-drywall, and final?
- ☐ What is your policy if my inspector flags an issue?
- ☐ How do you document and correct punch-list items?
- ☐ What third-party testing do you do (blower door, duct leakage, radon)?

Warranty and post-closing service

Washington's construction defect statute (RCW 64.50) gives builders a chance to repair before litigation. Know the process before something breaks.

- ☐ What does your written warranty cover at 1 year, 2 years, and 10 years?
- ☐ Do you offer a third-party warranty (e.g., 2-10 HBW)?
- ☐ What is the process to submit a warranty claim, and how fast do you respond?
- ☐ Who handles emergency service calls after hours in the first year?

Site, lot, and utilities (custom builds)

- ☐ Who pays for site prep, tree removal, and rock excavation if we hit it?
- ☐ Is the lot on septic or sewer, and who pays for the septic design and permits?
- ☐ How is stormwater handled, and does the lot need a critical-areas review?
- ☐ Is the well tested for flow and water quality before closing?

Want a second set of eyes?

I help Washington buyers review builder proposals, spec sheets, and contracts before they sign. Send me your documents and your questions. No preparation needed.

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