

Tips for Finding & Hiring an Electrician

by HomeAdvisor



Looking for an Electrician for Hire?

Whether you're doing a home remodel or simply fixing a flickering light, you're probably looking to hire an electrician. This guide walks you through everything you need to know to confidently hire a licensed professional. You'll learn about how much electricians charge and why they cost what they do. You'll understand the difference between an Apprentice, Journeyman and Master Electrician. There are some excellent tips to keep the project cost down while also diving into what projects they do and which you may need a specialist for. Maybe most importantly, you'll learn what questions to ask your electrical contractor before a job starts and after it ends.

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Common Electrical Projects

Every home needs electrical repairs from time to time, but because of the dangers involved, these repairs don't make safe do-it-yourself projects. Most folks will be better off hiring professional electricians.

Electricians do a fair amount of larger remodeling and new construction projects but also common residential projects including:

- [Installing a light fixture or chandelier.](#)
- [Installing a ceiling fan.](#)
- [Adding an outlet.](#)
- [Updating or replacing a circuit breaker.](#)
- [Installing or updating an electrical panel.](#)
- [Adding outdoor lighting and other electrical features.](#)

For cost information related to the above tasks, visit our [Electrical Cost Guide](#).

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How to Hire an Electrician

Knowing how to hire an electrician involves a little reading and research combined with knowing the right questions to ask. Follow these steps before you make that first call.

1. **Read this article.**

At the very least, go through the list of questions, tips and FAQ's we've included. Arming yourself with the best information gives you the tools and confidence to get the right professional for the job. Understanding [basic electrical wiring](#) will help you understand the problems in your home.

2. **Research Costs.**

Familiarize yourself with the [typical costs per hour for electrical work](#) below. But

don't stop at this article. Dive into specific costs unique to your project. Knowing what charges to expect puts you in a better spot when the bids and bill come in.

3. **Check Reviews.**

Browse our directory to find local professionals near you, read reviews and get multiple quotes and callbacks. Reviews are a wonderful way to narrow your search. You can also find this feature in our app.

4. **Speak with several professionals.**

Don't take the first bid. Always get at least 3 bids for your project. Talk with each professional and ask them targeted questions about your project and situation. You can find a list of suggested questions below.

5. **Check your professional's credentials.**

In almost all cases, anyone working on your home needs a valid license and insurance. If you're unsure of a pro's licensing, find another reputable professional.

Ready to start your electrical work?

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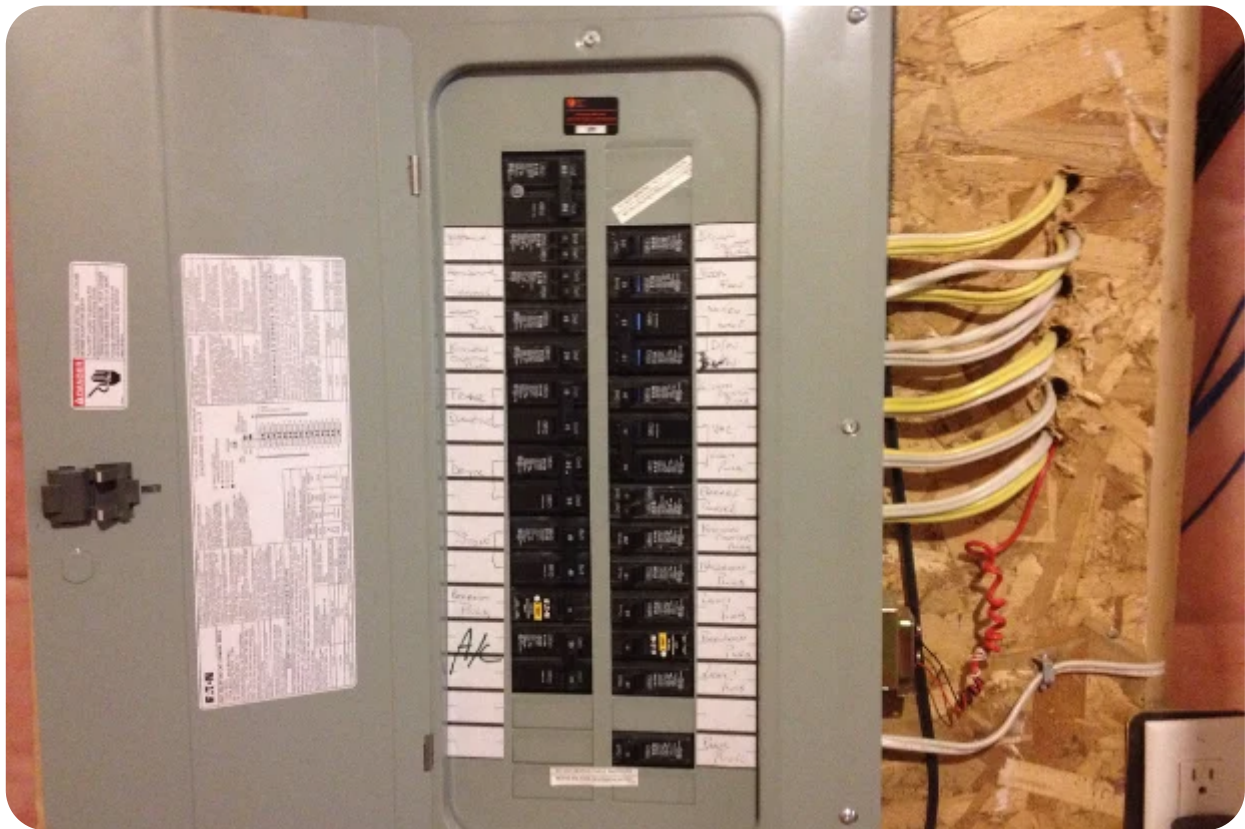
How Much Does an Electrician Cost Per Hour?

An electrician's cost per hour comes in between **\$50 and \$100**. It'll vary depending on your location and the type of professional you hire. Areas with a higher cost of living can expect to pay on the higher end of that scale. Licensing level may also increase the price.

Usually you'll pay a higher rate for the first hour. This covers their travel and time expense. Emergency or after-hours rates are usually higher too - expect to pay an emergency fee of **up to \$300** plus a higher hourly rate.

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5 Quick Tips for Hiring an Electrician



Electrician services are a necessary part of homeownership. Whatever the job, large or small, the bill can add up rapidly. Because these services are expensive, here are some tips on how to get the most bang for your buck:

1. Don't Be Misled by an Electrician's Hourly Rates

Many people pay too much attention to the hourly rate electricians charge. This amount can vary from **\$50 to \$100**. The hourly rate only has meaning when it is considered along with the firm's work quality, equipment and experience.

A truly skilled, well-equipped professional with a truck full of parts that charges **\$100 an hour** can be a much wiser choice than an inexperienced hack, working with inadequate tools and no parts, but charging much less. Often, more experienced professionals get the job done quickly with warranted work.

2. Compare Travel Charges

Rates reflect travel times. Travel charges can have a big impact on your costs and are in some ways easier to compare than hourly rates. Many electricians spend a third or more of their time navigating traffic on their way to a jobsite. Every contractor must find a way to pay for the expense of driving each day.

Travel charges include:

- a higher rate for the first hour
- a flat "trip charge"

- a minimum for each visit
- a higher overall hourly rate.

When you first call the professional, ask how and what they charge and see if it makes sense for your situation. For example, a trip charge and a relatively low hourly rate make sense on a longer job. For a shorter job, you'll do better with someone who absorbs travel costs by charging a higher hourly rate.

3. Bundle Repair Jobs Together

To save money and time on electrical repair work, bundle projects together. Any time you discover an electrical problem, put it on a list.

When you feel it's time to call a pro, review your list and then conduct a mini-inspection of your home. Look for faulty switches and dysfunctional or crowded outlets. When the electrician comes, you'll save money and time by getting everything taken care of at once.

4. How to Prepare & What to Know Before the Electrician Arrives

The less time the electrician spends dealing with inconveniences, the more money you will save.

Some preparation tips:

- Be as thorough and detailed in describing your needs to your contractor. The more they know, the quicker the job will go.
- Before they arrive, prepare a precise list of items you want serviced. Electricians have budgeted their time for a service call. They don't have time for additional requests once they are on site.
- Make sure the electrical panel box is accessible. You'll pay for the time it takes to access it.
- Clear away fragile items, knickknacks and furniture from areas where you expect the them to work.
- If you have questions about the project, ask them before they start. Most are happy to run you through the problem and the process of fixing it.
- Ask about potential issues after the work is complete. During a service call a professional will spot any potential hazards.
- You'll lose power to parts of your home while they work. Be prepared to pause anything you're doing during the service call.
- In most cases you'll have the option to either pay at the time of service or have a bill sent to you. You'll be able to pay with cash, credit and sometimes check.

A typical project involves:

1. Clearing or gaining access to the problem area.
2. Diagnosing the problem.
3. Shutting the power off at the service panel.
4. Repairs or installation. This may also include leaving for parts.
5. Clean up.

5. Install Money-Saving Electrical Fixtures

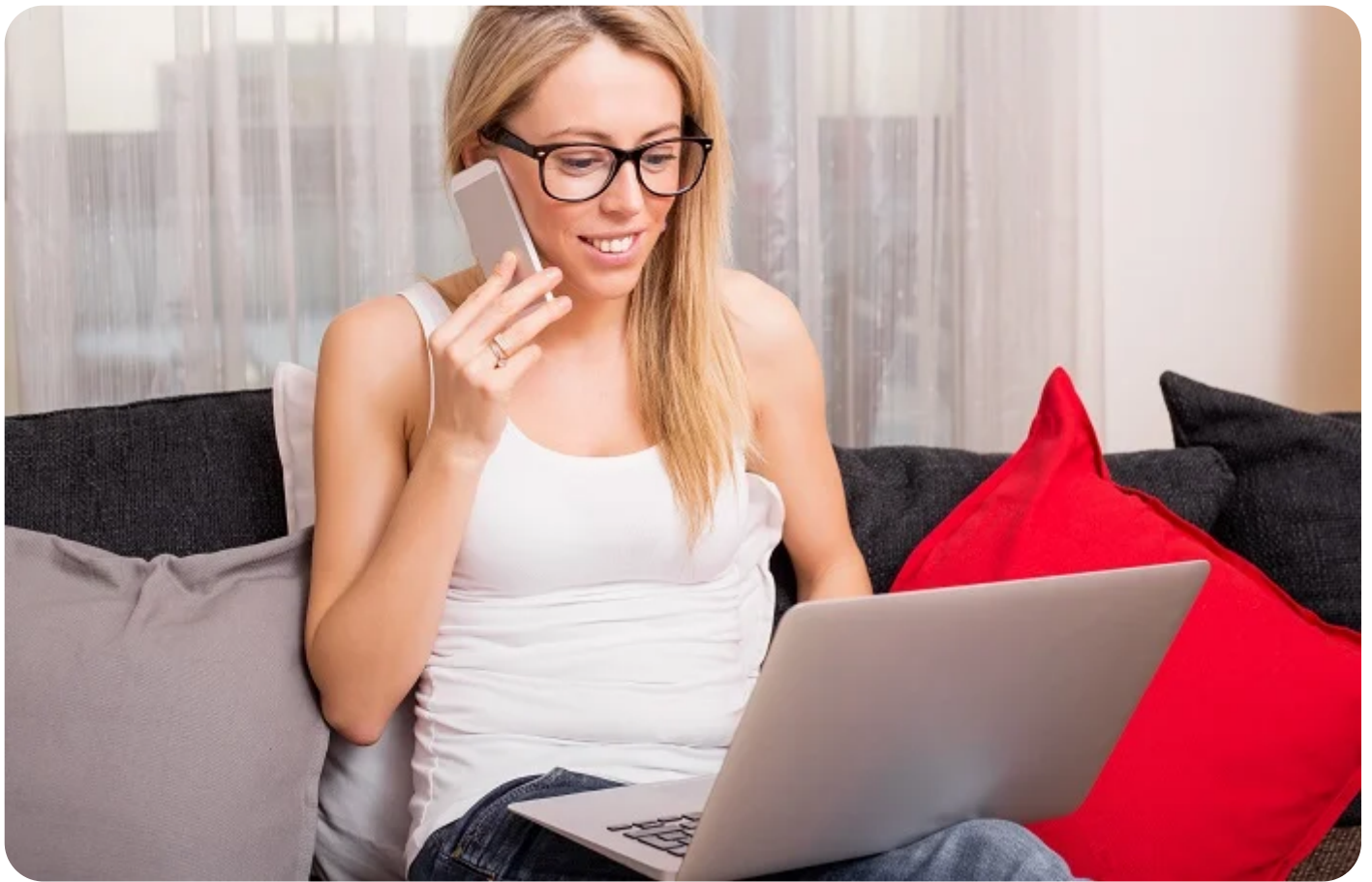
- By switching from ordinary incandescent light fixtures or bulbs to fluorescent or LED ones, you can substantially reduce energy consumption in your home.
- Motion detector switches can help you save money on outdoor lighting while at the same time providing very cost-effective security to your home.
- Creative landscape lighting and indoor accent lighting can make your home more appealing to you, your guests and potential buyers in the future.

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Question to Ask an Electrician



Asking questions is the best way to find a qualified electrician. Before you have anyone come into your home for expensive repairs, interview them first. Ask your potential contractor these questions:

1. Do you have a license to perform electrical work in this state?

All states require an electrical license or work performed under a Master Electrician. You should also ask how many on the job hours of experience they have.

2. Do you have insurance?

Never use one who isn't insured. You can ask to see proof of insurance.

3. Do you have prior work references?

You might skip this for small jobs like installing a light or outlet. For larger projects, always get references.

4. What are your rates?

Always ask up front. Getting a detailed quote up front is the best way to go.

5. Who is going to do the actual work?

Often, a Master Electrician will come out to diagnose and bid on projects, but they have their apprentice and journeyman electricians do the work. This isn't a terrible thing, in fact it's common practice. The Master's license is on the line with any work he supervises.

6. Is your work warrantied or guaranteed?

Any reputable company or contractor warranties their work, usually for at least a year.

7. Are you usually on time?

Overbooking is a frequent problem with electrical work. Often, a service call goes long, and they end up showing up at your home late. This common complaint is easily remedied with an up-front and honest discussion. If they can't be on time, make sure they'll call.

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FAQs

What does an electrician do? —

There is often some confusion about the type of work these professionals do. They only work on electrical systems such as outlets, lighting fixtures and electrical panels - they aren't appliance repairmen.

What are the different types of electricians and what do they do? —

There are three types of electricians: Master, Journeyman and Apprentice. Electrical licensing varies quite a bit by state. Some have licenses for apprentices and some do not. Some have a master's rank while others stop at journeyman. Despite the differences, they all require a minimum amount of experience and usually classroom time.

- **Apprentice** electricians aren't usually licensed and spend 4 years learning the trade. Throughout that time, they work on a wide range of projects to learn to become a Journeyman. They'll do basic work like installing fixtures and replacing outlets all the way to assisting in wiring a home. Regardless of the type of project, they must always be supervised by a Journeyman or Master electrician.
- **Journeyman** work without supervision. In a few states, this is the highest level available and they can do all levels of work from wiring a new home to installing a light. In some states, they need a separate electrical contractor license to run a business. In places with a master's level, a journeyman can do all work besides design new electrical systems.
- **Master electricians** usually manage a shop, design new electrical systems in new construction and oversee both Journeyman and Apprentices. They typically bid

new projects. Though they focus on larger projects, it's not unheard of for a homeowner to request a Master Electrician for a house call. If you do, expect to spend up to 25% more for the visit.

Are you supposed to tip an electrician? —

Generally, you don't tip electricians, but that's not to say they don't appreciate it if you do. You can offer them something to drink or eat, like coffee and donuts. Most will appreciate it if you do.

What education and certifications do you need to become an electrician? —

The education and certifications required to become an electrician vary by state, though they generally follow this list:

1. Apprentice

- Does not always require a license depending on the state.
- Learns on the job under Journeyman and Master Electricians.
- Usually needs 4 years on-the-job training before they can test for a Journeyman license. Many states also require a technical degree to advance.
- Always require supervision.

2. Journeyman

- Needs between 8,000 to 10,000 hours of on-the-job training and usually 500 to 1,000 hours of classroom experience.
- Can usually supervise apprentices.
- They can diagnose and repair electrical problems.

3. Master

- Achieved after an additional two years (4,000 hours) working as a Journeyman and taking the Master Electrician Exam.
- Besides diagnosing and repairing electrical systems, they also design them. In most places they run shops and inspect Journeyman and Apprentice work.
- Not a recognized rank in all states.

4. **Electrical Contractor License** is an optional license in some states for a Master Electrician to run a business. Some states have this instead of the Master license.

How much do electricians make? —

Electricians make an average of **\$26 per hour** but it ranges with experience and licensing. An apprentice may make about half that while a Master Electrician may hit closer to **\$40 per hour**. This figure represents how much they make; not how much they bill. Their salary is only one component of their costs. They must also figure in overhead, taxes, equipment, insurance and several other expenses.

Do I need to hire an electrician? —

Leave electrical work to the professionals. Electrical systems are complex and **potentially hazardous** when not handled and installed correctly. If it were easy, it wouldn't take 4 years to become a journeyman or 6 years for a master's license. If you are determined to forge ahead yourself, **understand home electrical safety** before beginning any project.

Even for simple common electrical projects, a licensed pro is best. Not only is it safer, but contractors guarantee and insure their work. Hire a professional to keep your home's electrical systems functioning properly and safely.

How do I find a good electrician? —

Use our comprehensive [electrician directory page](#) to find local, licensed contractors. You can browse ratings, reviews and pricing of top professionals in your area. Sign up to receive quotes or let us match you to an [electrician near you](#).

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Related Resources:

[Knowing When to Call an Electrical Wiring Contractor](#)

[Preventing Home Improvement Fraud](#)

[Powerful Electrical Upgrades](#)

[Electrical Wiring Basics](#)

[What to Know When Hiring a Fence Installer](#)

[Professional Carpet Cleaners vs. DIY Rentals: Which Works Best & How to Find a Pro](#)

[Head Off Common Construction Problems](#)

[Outlets and Switches](#)

[How to Find and Hire Painters \(Plus 10 Questions You Should Always Ask\)](#)