

How to Choose a Luxury Garage Builder

Check the builder's licence on the official register, confirm insurance, call past clients, insist on a written contract with a payment schedule tied to finished work, and use only an ALI certified car lift.

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A collector garage is a building project, an electrical project and often a lift installation. Vet the garage specialist for each part. Do these checks before you sign.

1. Check the licence on the official register

Do not rely on a logo on a website. Search the regulator's own register.

- **California.** Check the licence on the Contractors State License Board (CSLB) website or call 1-800-321-2752. CSLB also tells homeowners to get at least three local references and to call them (CSLB, Homeowner Checklists).
- **Other US states.** Most states run a contractor licence lookup. Search your state licensing board.
- **New South Wales, Australia.** A contractor licence is needed for residential building work valued at more than \$5,000 in labour and materials, including GST (NSW Government, Checking your contractor).
- **Queensland, Australia.** A QBCC licence is needed for building work valued over \$3,300 (QBCC, Who must hold a QBCC licence).
- **Other Australian states.** Each state has its own licence and threshold. Check the state regulator.
- **UK.** There is no general builder licence. TrustMark calls itself the "Government Endorsed Quality Scheme" and vets its registered businesses (TrustMark). Federation of Master Builders members must pass a vetting and inspection process before they join (FMB).

2. Confirm insurance and warranty

Ask for certificates of liability insurance and, where the law needs it, workers' compensation. Call the insurer to confirm the policy is live. In Queensland, the head contractor must pay a Home Warranty Scheme premium for insurable residential work over \$3,300 (QBCC, Key Information for QBCC Licensees and Homeowners). QBCC warns that an unlicensed contractor may void your access to that cover (QBCC, Who must hold a QBCC licence).

3. Call past clients and see the work

Ask for three recent collector or showroom garage projects. Ask each client:

- Did the job finish on time and on budget?
- How did the builder handle changes and problems?
- Would you hire them again?

Visit one finished garage if you can. Look at the floor finish, the cabinet joinery and the lift installation.

4. Check the car lift

The 2024 International Residential Code (IRC) requires any automotive lift in a home to be listed and labeled to ANSI/ALI ALCTV. It also bans lifts in the habitable space of a dwelling (ALI, 2024 IRC Chapter 3). Only ALI certified lifts carry the ALI Gold Certification Label. BendPak itself states that not all of its lift models are ALI certified (BendPak, HD-9 product page). So check the exact model in the ALI Directory of Certified Lifts.

Ask the installer to confirm that your slab meets the lift maker's concrete requirements. BendPak, for example, needs a core sample test on existing concrete to confirm a minimum strength of 3,000 psi (BendPak, Concrete Foundation Minimum Requirements).

5. Get a written contract

CSLB's checklist is a good model for any market (CSLB, Homeowner Checklists). The contract should:

- describe the work, materials and equipment in detail, including the lift model, floor system and cabinet brand;
- give start and finish dates;
- say who gets the permits and whether permit fees are included;
- put every change in writing.

6. Pay as work is done

Tie each payment to finished work. In California, payments cannot exceed the value of work performed, except the down payment. The down payment cannot be more than \$1,000 or 10 percent of the contract price, whichever is less (CSLB, Learn About Home Improvement Contracts). In Queensland, the deposit is at most 10% on a contract under \$19,999 and must not exceed 5% on a contract of \$20,000 or more (QBCC, Key Information for QBCC Licensees and Homeowners). If a builder asks for a large sum before work starts, ask why.

7. Compare like with like

Get at least three written quotes for the same specification. Read our [cost guide](#) for typical ranges, and our [questions to ask](#) before you sign.

Sources

- [CSLB, Home Improvement Contracts: Homeowner Checklists](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [CSLB, Learn About Home Improvement Contracts](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [NSW Government, Checking your contractor or tradesperson is qualified](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [NSW Government, General building work](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [QBCC, Who must hold a QBCC licence](#), accessed 2026-10-29

- [QBCC, Key Information for QBCC Licensees and Homeowners \(May 2025\)](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [TrustMark, How it works](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [Federation of Master Builders, Find a builder](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [Automotive Lift Institute, 2024 IRC Chapter 3: Automotive Lift Requirements](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [BendPak, HD-9 Four-Post Lift, 9,000-lbs. Capacity](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [BendPak, Concrete Foundation Minimum Requirements for BendPak Lifts](#), accessed 2026-10-29

Frequently asked questions

How much deposit should I pay a garage builder?

It depends on where you live. In California, CSLB says the down payment for a home improvement job cannot be more than \$1,000 or 10 percent of the contract price, whichever is less. In Queensland, QBCC says the deposit on a contract of \$20,000 or more must not exceed 5%. Check the rule for your state or country.

How do I check that a car lift is certified?

Look for the ALI Gold Certification Label on the lift and find the exact model in the Automotive Lift Institute's Directory of Certified Lifts. Certification applies to a lift model, not to a brand.

Does a listing on this site mean the builder is vetted?

No. A listing is not a recommendation. Check each garage specialist's licence, insurance and references yourself.