

Questions to Ask a Garage Builder Before You Sign

Before you sign, ask the garage builder for their licence number, proof of insurance, three recent references, who pulls the permits, the exact lift model and its ALI certification, the slab specification, and a payment schedule tied to finished work.

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Use this list in your first meeting with each garage specialist. Ask every builder the same questions. Write down the answers, and ask for the important ones in writing.

The business

1. **What is your licence number, and which register shows it?** Check it yourself. In California, use the CSLB website or call 1-800-321-2752 (CSLB, Homeowner Checklists). In Queensland, QBCC tells homeowners to see the contractor's QBCC licence before they sign a contract or hand over money (QBCC). In the UK, ask if the business is TrustMark registered or a Federation of Master Builders member.
2. **What insurance do you hold?** Ask for the certificates. Call the insurer to confirm the policy is live.
3. **Who will run my job day to day?** Ask for the name of the site lead and how often they will be on site.
4. **Which trades do you use, and are they licensed?** Ask who will do the electrical work for the lift, the mini-split and any EV charger. In New South Wales, specialist work such as electrical wiring and air conditioning needs a licence whatever its cost (NSW Government, Checking your contractor).

Past work

1. **Can I speak to three recent clients?** CSLB tells homeowners to get at least three local references and to call them (CSLB, Homeowner Checklists).
2. **Can I see a finished collector or showroom garage?** Look at the floor finish, the cabinet fit and the lift installation.
3. **What went wrong on a recent job, and how did you fix it?** A clear answer is a good sign.

Design and specification

1. **Will you design to my cars?** Give the builder the length, width, height and weight of each car. Ask how they set door height and ceiling height for a lift.
2. **Which lift model will you install, and is it ALI certified?** The 2024 IRC requires any home automotive lift to be listed and labeled to ANSI/ALI ALCTV (ALI, 2024 IRC Chapter 3). Check the model in the ALI Directory of Certified Lifts.

3. **Does my slab meet the lift maker's requirements?** For example, BendPak lists a minimum of 4.25 in. of 3,000 psi concrete, aged 28 days, for its XPR-9 two-post and HD-9 four-post series. It needs a core test on existing concrete (BendPak, Concrete Foundation Minimum Requirements). Ask who pays for the test and any new concrete.
4. **Which floor system will you use?** Ask for the product name, the number of coats, and how the slab will be prepared. Cost guides price thin-coat and thick-coat epoxy very differently (Fixr, 2025).
5. **How will you control humidity and temperature?** Ask for the equipment, its size and where the condensate drains.

Permits and codes

1. **Who applies for the permits, and are the fees in the price?** CSLB's checklist asks both questions (CSLB, Homeowner Checklists).
2. **What does the code need between the garage and the house?** For an attached garage, ask how the builder will meet the fire separation rules. See our [permits and codes guide](#).

Price, payments and schedule

1. **Is this a fixed price?** Ask what is excluded, and what triggers a change order.
2. **What is the payment schedule?** In California, the down payment cannot be more than \$1,000 or 10 percent of the contract price, whichever is less. Payments cannot exceed the value of work performed (CSLB, Learn About Home Improvement Contracts).
3. **When will you start and finish?** CSLB's checklist asks whether the contract states these dates (CSLB, Homeowner Checklists).
4. **How do you handle changes?** CSLB advises that every change or addition is put in writing.
5. **What warranty do you give, and on what?** Ask for the building, the floor coating, the cabinets and the lift as separate items.

After you get the answers

Compare the written quotes line by line. Our [cost guide](#) gives typical ranges for each part of the job. A listing on this site is not a recommendation, so do these checks for every builder.

Sources

- [CSLB, Home Improvement Contracts: Homeowner Checklists](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [CSLB, Learn About Home Improvement Contracts](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [QBCC, Who must hold a QBCC licence](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [NSW Government, Checking your contractor or tradesperson is qualified](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [Automotive Lift Institute, 2024 IRC Chapter 3: Automotive Lift Requirements](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [BendPak, Concrete Foundation Minimum Requirements for BendPak Lifts](#), accessed 2026-10-29
- [Fixr, Cost of Concrete Floor Coating](#), accessed 2026-10-29

Frequently asked questions

Should the builder or the homeowner get the permit?

Agree it in writing. CSLB's homeowner checklist asks whether the contract requires the contractor to get any needed permits before work starts, and whether the permit fees are included.

What should I ask about the car lift?

Ask for the exact model, whether that model is in the ALI Directory of Certified Lifts, and whether your slab meets the lift maker's concrete table. The 2024 IRC requires a home lift to be listed and labeled to ANSI/ALI ALCTV.

How many quotes should I get?

Get at least three written quotes for the same specification, so you compare like with like.