

Buyers Guide: Tub & Shower Remodeling

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO HIRING YOUR CONTRACTOR



How will this booklet help me?

At Shugarman's Bath, we want our customers to be fully informed. By now you have most likely met with one of our team members. You probably have a quote for your project, or will be receiving one soon. You might also be interested in doing some shopping around and comparing. We get it, and encourage it, which is why we are providing you with this buyer's guide.

To help you as you explore your options, this book offers three things:

- Recommended questions to ask contractors
- Why we think these questions are worth asking
- How we, Shugarman's Bath, answer these questions

The Shugarman family has decades of experience hiring contractors for our own home remodeling projects, as well as doing projects for others. We've learned a lot of lessons the hard way over the years and have built our family business to overcome these issues. Whether you ultimately decide to hire us, or someone else, what we care about most is that you end up happy. Understanding a contractor's answers to the questions shared in this book will help you make the best decision for you.

Why is this so important? Well the Consumer Federation of America puts out Consumer Complaint Surveys, and in its most recent 2022 edition, Home Improvement and Contractor Issues was listed as the #2 cause of complaints by American consumers. #2 only behind Auto Sales and Repairs! The survey explains, "Consumers often pay for services in advance and have trouble obtaining a refund or corrections to the shoddy work when the relationship deteriorates."

We want you to avoid that. We hope these questions will help. Given the length of this guide, please feel free to jump around.

Warm regards,

The Shugarman Family



Rich Shugar CJ

List of Questions to Ask Your Contractors

Use the chart in the back of this booklet to compare all of your potential contractors!

- 1 What is your procedure for protecting my home during the remodeling process?
- 2 How easy is the product you are installing to clean and maintain?
- 3 How long will I be without the use of my tub or shower?
- 4 Do you guarantee your response times?
- 5 Is the price in your bid a rough estimate, or a guaranteed final price?
- 6 Under what circumstances could my price change?
- 7 Is your warranty in writing and is it attached to your contract?
- 8 Is all of the plumbing in the tub and shower area warrantied for life, or just the valve?
- 9 Do you guarantee your sealant for as long as I live in my home?
- 10 How long do you guarantee the waterproofing of your wall system? Does it include any products that absorb water or are not code compliant?
- 11 Do you use subcontractors?
- 12 Will the contractor doing the plumbing have the proper license?
- 13 Does the exterior surface of your material have antimicrobial protection?
- 14 How do you support the base of your shower or tub?
- 15 What happens if you discover mold after taking out my old tub or shower?
- 16 Is your contractor truly local?



1 What is your procedure for protecting my home during the remodeling process?

It might surprise you to know that according to a recent article in “Remodeling by JLC,” the largest contributor to homeowner dissatisfaction during remodeling is **job site dust**. 85% of homeowners say job site dust is the most serious inconvenience of remodeling and 81% of homeowners are unsatisfied with contractors’ dust management.

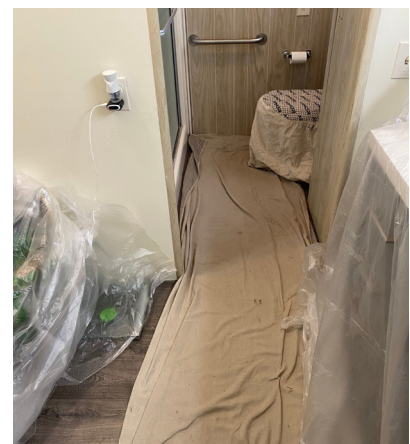
Another recent study shows that homes being remodeled have five to eight times the amount of particles in their air than homes that are not being remodeled. Remodeling dust—some of it so small you can’t see—can damage a homeowners’ belongings and short and long-term health.

At Shugarman’s Bath, our factory-trained and certified installers are trained in the proper use and installation of dust barriers and HEPA filter equipment. Most jobs don’t require HEPA, but if they do, we have you covered.

On every job, we:

- set up dust barriers to keep dust contained in the work area.
- cover the HVAC vents in your bathroom to prevent dust from getting into your HVAC system and circulating throughout your home.
- cover your floors from your tub or shower to your entry door.
- cover your toilets with Toilet Armor.
- cover the countertops, lights and mirrors in your bathroom to protect them as well.

Not only do our home protection procedures protect you, they also contribute to your overall peace of mind. When homeowners see the extent we go to to protect their home before any work begins, a sense of comfort and confidence settles in knowing that we are professionals, and that we care.



2

How easy is the product you are installing to clean and maintain?

“Porous” means there are tiny little holes where water can get through. Many of the products used in today’s shower and bath remodels are porous. Most tiles, for example, are in fact porous. If a porous material is used in your tub or shower area, water will attempt to work its way through it over time, which can lead to moisture build up behind the walls, mold, rotten wood, etc. Porous materials also create the perfect conditions for hard water, soap scum and bacteria to build up. This is one of the reasons why you see shelves loaded with all sorts of cleaning chemicals in Home Depot and the grocery store. When you review our Care & Maintenance sheet, you will see that we specifically advise against using most of those chemicals, in part because you simply don’t need them with our products.

Moving past porous wall materials, many non-porous wall materials are installed with grout... but that grout is porous! So the same issues are still a problem. Grout is also abrasive, and if you have ever tried to clean tile, you know that grout can be even harder to clean than the tile itself.

Many other products require sealers to be added to them to attempt to solve the above issues. These sealers then need to be reapplied over time to stay effective. Other companies sell all-acrylic or PVC products which need to have trim pieces glued and caulked in order to make sure the edges look nice. Caulking also requires maintenance and upkeep, and trim pieces get loose and can look sloppy overtime.

Fortunately, technology has come a long way in this area. Why use a product with built in maintenance issues? There are now bathroom systems that do not use any porous materials or trim pieces, require no extensive maintenance, are simple to clean, and actually increase in value from the date of purchase rather than deteriorate.

This is the type of system that we install.

Our Maintenance Recommendations:

Ask your contractor to show you the cleaning and maintenance instructions for the products they’ll be installing.

Review their contract for all of the areas where improper maintenance can void the warranty. Compare theirs to ours. We think you will be happy with ours.

Avoid porous materials. You can get the look of tile without the downsides.

Please don’t underestimate the inconvenience of maintenance and cleaning.

3 How long will I be without the use of my tub or shower?

Specialists can complete a tub or shower in 1-2 days. General contractors will typically be closer to 1-2 weeks. As long as the committed time frame works for you, that's what's important. Shugarman's is in the specialist category and completes most tub and shower remodels in 1-2 days.

4 Do you guarantee your response times?

You have probably heard about, or even experienced, the enormous frustration of a contractor that you can't get a hold of. If you haven't, I hope you never do! Asking this question will help you understand what level of communication your contractor is willing to commit to.

At Shugarman's we guarantee our availability and response times with our "Find Us or Fine Us Guarantee". Most calls are answered as they come in, but if we miss your call and don't call you back within one business day, you get to fine us \$250! Yep, that's right, we'll write you a check for \$250 if you don't hear back from us right away. Your experience from start to finish is our top priority. Our "Find Us or Fine Us Guarantee" is one of the many ways we stand behind our commitment to making you happy.

5 Is the price in your bid a rough estimate, or a guaranteed final price?

Maybe you've gotten the "ballpark" price on the back of a business card. Maybe it was a "Time and Materials" estimate with no limit on either the time or the materials. Most estimates come with a bunch of disclaimers and are subject to big changes in price. In tub and shower remodeling, issues behind the walls are the most common cause of big price increases.

At Shugarman's we don't give estimates. We give exact prices - in writing - and they include our **Never Any Extras Guarantee**. A contractor should be able to look you in the eye and tell you that the price on the contract is the price you will pay. This seems obvious, but it is actually rare in our industry. For some contractors it is strategic. It's a way to submit a low bid to win the job, while knowing that change orders will increase the price later.

Finally, if your contractor is quoting Time and Materials, know that The California Contractors State License Board specifically recommends net pricing, as opposed to Time and Materials, in part because budgets are notoriously low and these contracts regularly lead to big overages.

6

Under what circumstances could my price change?

This question is critical. While Question #5 is about estimates, this question is about the contract. Many times, when comparing companies you are also comparing prices. Many contractors do not guarantee their price. Even if they say they do, their contract is likely to have wording similar to this:

Quoted prices apply only to the specific products, services, and quantities stated in the Home Improvement Agreement, and such prices may be adjusted by contractor to reflect additional costs and expenses associated with circumstances that are unanticipated and unforeseen at the time this Agreement is executed by you.

In other words, even with your signed contract, you do not know what the final cost will be. This is another area where salespeople will assure you that it's not an issue. If a salesperson tells you your price won't change, ask for it in writing.

At Shugarman's we proudly share our **Never Any Extras Guarantee**. Our family takes pride in this solution to the problem of hidden costs. Take a moment to review each item that we have specifically put in writing that is covered. If all of these items are not specifically covered in your contract, the price of your project could go up 10 - 100%.

Point of Pride: While our contract prices may change because people upgrade a fixture, or change their design, 99% of our contract prices do not change as a result of conditions behind the walls. No surprises.

Check out our
Never Any Extras
Guarantee 

SHUGARMAN'S GUARANTEE

When we open up the walls of your bathroom's wet area, you will not be charged anything extra if we find any of the following conditions in your bathroom's wet area:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| ✓ Stud damage | ✓ Damaged or leaking plumbing |
| ✓ Subfloor damage | ✓ Termite damage (extermination is not covered) |
| ✓ Subfloor leveling | ✓ Hidden electrical that needs to be moved |
| ✓ Dry rot | ✓ Mold |

We don't like it when a price changes. That's why we cover these commonly found conditions that most contractors are charging extra for. We want to be forthright about our exclusions. Here are some of the things we do not do:

- ✗ Exterminate anything (e.g. termites, rodents, etc.)
- ✗ Repair water heaters, water pressure regulators, or water shut-off valves
- ✗ Clear clogged or slow drains. Drains that were clogged or slow prior to our arrival will remain in the same condition at the completion of our project.
- ✗ Paint, tile, or apply wallpaper
- ✗ Perform any repairs outside of the wet area
- ✗ No cast iron repairs

We will replace cast iron p-traps as long as we can connect to the existing cast iron, but we do NO cast iron repairs. If any existing cast iron pipes are damaged, the purchaser will have this work performed by another qualified contractor at the purchaser's expense.

Terms and Conditions apply. Please see the contract for complete details.

WARRANTY

So long as they are installed by us, we warrant the wall surrounds, shower floors/bases, bathtubs, shower valves, shower doors, and accessories (collectively referred to as "the Product") against defects in materials or workmanship for as long as the purchaser owns the home where the Product is installed. This warranty also includes all seals that we install, provided the purchaser invites us to inspect and maintain the seals every five (5) years. For more information about this limited warranty, please see the contract for complete details.



Is your warranty in writing and is it attached to your contract?

Many contractors say they offer a lifetime warranty. That sounds good when they are in your home. In fact they may even have a piece of paper that says “Limited Lifetime Warranty.” Unfortunately, this is rarely what you think it is. And because many salespeople try to talk their way around this issue, you will only find out if you review the contract yourself. In every case that we have found, these “lifetime warranties” are not comprehensive and give the contractor many ways out.

Contractors typically use many different manufacturers. They provide a tub from one manufacturer, bath fixtures from another, and wall systems from yet another. When you look at the contract it will say that the warranty is based on the manufacturer’s warranty. Even if the product is found to be defective, few of these manufacturers’ warranties include the labor to remove the existing product and install the replacement. If labor does happen to be included, it is usually limited to as little as one year - not very helpful. Because of all the limitations with manufacturers’ warranties, you really want your contractor’s warranty to demonstrate their intention to stand behind both the product **and** the installation.

At Shugarman’s we are offering you a true, lifetime, bumper-to-bumper contractor’s warranty. Once we finish the job, if you get so much as a drip, or need a shower door adjusted, we are here for you and you only have one place to call.

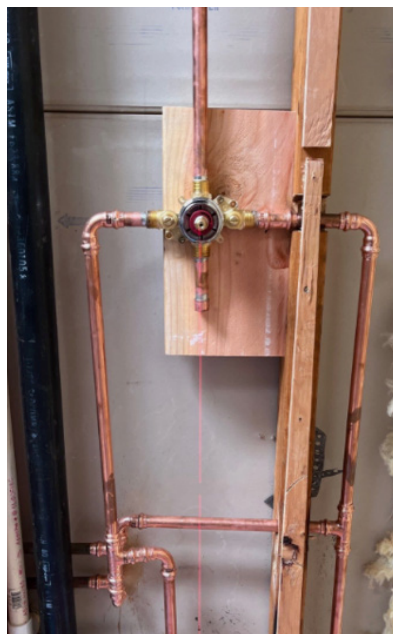
Bonus: Check to see if your contractor’s warranty is backed by the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. Good Housekeeping has very rigorous standards for being backed by their Money Back Guarantee. Therefore, if your contractor is listed with them, you can feel even more confident about the value of their warranty.

8 Is all of the plumbing in the tub and shower area warrantied for life, or just the valve?

In the wall behind your shower handle is a 5 inch valve which controls water temperature and pressure. It is very important that this is replaced. If you ask your contractor “Do you change the plumbing?” and they say “Yes”, they are most likely referring to this valve. The problem is that they are attaching the new valve to old pipes. When these old pipes fail and you call them to fix the leak under warranty, you will likely find out it’s the old pipes that are leaking and not the valve. To fix these pipes you will have to tear out one of your new walls to access them. Guess who pays for that? The same goes for the p-trap, which is the primary drain piece under your shower base. Again, when this drain piece fails, your new tub or shower base will need to come out to fix it.

Some contractors will address this issue with change orders. Instead of anticipating that this plumbing will need to be replaced and including it in their original bid, they will charge you several hundred dollars additional when they “discover” that it needs to be fixed during the job. This is another one of those areas where some contractors try to win jobs with low prices, knowing that they’ll ultimately collect more by the time the job is completed.

At Shugarman’s we warrant all of the plumbing from the point where it enters the tub/shower area. This includes the valve, p-trap, and the pipes. In this way we are able to protect you from ever having to redo everything at your own expense later on.



Do you guarantee your sealant for as long as I live in my home?

Grout is a sealant for tile. Caulk and silicone are examples of other sealants for finishes like acrylic. Inferior sealants will crack over time and allow moisture behind your walls. This is bad. How do you know if your contractor will be using inferior sealants? First, ask the question above. Length of warranty usually goes hand in hand with quality. Beyond that, check the contract. Many contracts have wording similar to this:

Caulking Joints: Inspect caulking joints monthly for damage or any signs of separation from the mating surface. Cracks in the caulking will allow water to leak into the surrounding surfaces. Reapply caulking to any joint showing signs of wear or cracking. Failure to inspect and repair caulking joints will void the warranty.

“Void the warranty”... This regularly means the entire warranty.

At Shugarman's we use a mold resistant, color-matched silicone that we warranty for as long as you live in your home. This sealant has built in elastomers. Changes in water temperature cause your walls to expand and contract, which causes cracking in inferior sealants. The elastomers in the silicone we use allow for this expansion and contraction, which prevents cracking, and allows us to guarantee it for as long as you live in your home.

10 How long do you guarantee the waterproofing of your wall system? Does it include any products that absorb water or are not code compliant?

Once your tub/shower is demoed, any mold removed, and water damage repaired, you want to keep it that way. Most contractors use greenboard or blueboard. These are not up to building code. Greenboard and blueboard are paper-backed and actually absorb water, which is the opposite of what you want.

If you decide on a traditional tile product, your contractor might use a tile backer board like HardieBacker. HardieBacker is better, but it requires another product like RedGard to guarantee the long-lasting water protection you want. Many contractors don't use RedGard, and if they do, they probably don't use it correctly. Proper use requires two coats and a 24-48 hour dry time in between, which slows a job down longer than many contractors are willing.

At Shugarman's, we use our four layer never-leak system so we can guarantee that water will not get behind the walls for as long as you own your home.

1. Our system starts with the tub or shower base.
2. Then we use a product called DensShield Tile Backer. DensShield is an ideal backer board for high moisture areas because it has a built-in moisture barrier that stops moisture at the surface. DensShield panels have scored a 10 under the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) D3273 test method - the highest level of performance for mold resistance set by ASTM International. For these reasons and more, DensShield is specifically recommended for code compliance in the bathroom tub and shower area.
3. Once the DensShield is installed, we use a special adhesive which chemically bonds a flashing strip to both your tub or shower base, and the DensShield. At this point, you are essentially waterproofed before installing your fourth layer.
4. The fourth layer is the actual BP-Cor2 material that we laminate to the DensShield thus creating a solid $\frac{5}{8}$ " thick wall that is virtually impenetrable.

Once this system is in place it is guaranteed for as long as you live in your home, with no special maintenance beyond reasonable cleaning and care practices. A Shugarman's wall system is long-lasting and easy to use, and we stand behind it with our industry-leading guarantee.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4

11 Do you use subcontractors?

This question is important for a number of reasons. If your contractor uses subcontractors, you need to ensure that the subcontractors are also licensed. Verifying this can be tricky because general contractors work with many subs and regularly do not know which one they are going to use when bidding your job.

You should co-sign checks to the subcontractors. If you don't, you are taking the risk that your contractor might not pay them. If your contractor does not pay the subcontractor, the subcontractor can place a lien on your home as you technically still owe them the money. *This is a very big deal.*

Contractors have less control over subcontractors than their own employees. This means that the likelihood of project delays, showing up late, and other inconveniences increase when subs are involved. All too often, contractors will say that they don't use subs, but use them anyway. Review the subcontractor section of your contract before signing. If it is not there, ask the contractor to put in writing that no subcontractors will be used unless:

- it is first agreed to in writing by both parties
- proof of licensure is provided
- insurance information is provided, and
- you can pay the subs directly

When subs are being used, it is normal for your contractor to hardly know the subcontractor they are sending to your home. They may even be trying them out on your project for the first time. This is just one more reason why it is generally preferred to avoid subcontractors, and that is what we do at Shugarman's Bath.

Full transparency: One area where we will use a subcontractor is on highly specialized, custom glass shower doors.

12

Will the contractor doing the plumbing have the proper license?

When replacing tubs and showers, the plumbing is arguably the most important part. This is because fixing that plumbing usually requires you to demo one of your new walls to get to it. So it is essential that the contractor doing the plumbing is well-qualified and has the proper license.

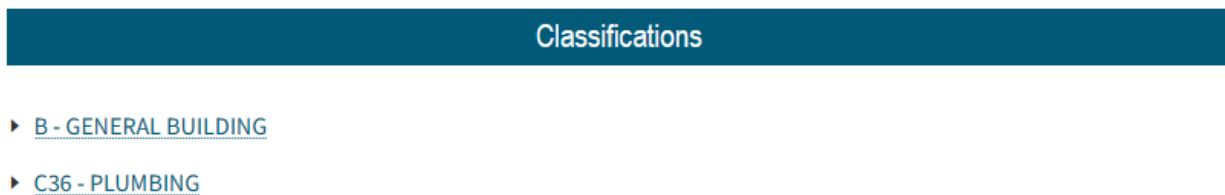
Checking licenses is as easy as 1, 2, 3:

- 1) Visit the Contractors State License Board website: cslb.ca/gov
- 2) Click "License Check"
- 3) Enter your contractor's information

If they are a licensed contractor, you will see a "B - General Building" license there. This is nice, but if it is all you see, then your contractor is not a licensed plumber. If your contractor is a licensed plumber, you will also see a "C36 - Plumbing" license on the CSLB website. Shugarman's Bath holds both licenses: CSLB #1060677.

While under certain circumstances it is not required to have a plumbing license to perform plumbing work, having the license shows that we have achieved a level of expertise with the most critical aspect of tub and shower remodeling.

Here is a what it will look like on the CSLB website if your contractor has both licenses:



13

Does the exterior surface of your material have antimicrobial protection?

You have likely read that the tub/shower area is one of the most germ-contaminated places in the home. The good news here is that recent improvements in technology have led to a new generation of building materials that resist the spread of germs. Given that the tub and shower area is where you go to make yourself clean, we recommend finding out whether or not your contractor is using germ-resistant, antimicrobial building materials for your project.

100% of Shugarman's wall systems have antimicrobial protection infused into the BP-Cor2 surface during the manufacturing process. This protection inhibits the growth of stain and odor causing bacteria, providing around-the-clock protection against dangerous microbes for the lifetime of the product.

How do you support the base of your shower or tub?

This is something that is typically not discussed at the time of sale but leads to dissatisfaction later on. There are four issues that come up when a base is low quality or improperly installed:

- It feels soft or squishy
- It feels unstable or wobbly
- Excessive water pooling, particularly in the corners
- The base cracks

Ask your contractor to show you their tolerances and written guarantees for these four issues. At Shugarman's we overcome these issues in a number of ways. First and foremost, every single one of our bases is water tested at the factory - literally 100% of them. Most manufacturers only test one out of 12 or 24, which means that the base being installed in your home is almost certainly untested.

We also do not use any bases with legs as you see pictured in **image #1**. These legs are designed for leveling and to create slope for drainage. But the space between the legs is problematic and can cause any one of the four issues listed above. To overcome this, pans with legs can be installed in a bed of mortar. The problem here is that you are now relying on a perfect installation, which even the best installers can't do 100% of the time. For example, if they do not fill in the spaces between the legs perfectly, it will flex, which leads to the "squishy base" feeling, or even cracking. If this happens on your base, most contractors will point you to the manufacturer, who will then blame it on the contractor's installation, leaving you, the homeowner, in a pickle.

At Shugarman's the vast majority of the pans and tubs we sell are either spray foam or solid stone composite. **Image #2** is a picture of a spray foam base. As you can see, it has no legs. Instead, it is a smooth, flat, high-density spray foam that is laser cut, leveled, and sloped at the factory. This substantially increases the likelihood of a perfect installation because the installer only needs to ensure that the surface the base is installed on is level - much easier than all of the pitfalls that come with installing bases with legs.

The second type of base is a solid stone composite which is the same idea - no legs, precision cut with slope set at the factory. If your contractor is not using one of these two types of bases, they are using old technology and you are asking for trouble.

Full transparency: Every now and then, we have a customer request a unique shape that only comes in the style with legs. In these rare occasions, our highly trained specialists are properly trained to install the base in mortar. Even in this case, our expectations of quality do not change, and Shugarman's warrants the base and the installation so you only ever have one place to call.

IMAGE #1



IMAGE #2



15 What happens if you discover mold after taking out my old tub or shower?

The real answer to this question is usually one of two things, and neither of them are good. If your contractor is not reputable, they won't say anything and simply cover it up leaving it to continue to grow. If your contractor is reputable, they will tell you about it and advise you to call a mold remediation company to have it taken care of. This typically costs between \$2,000 and \$5,000.

We say "the real answer" because most salespeople in the industry will tell you that they take care of it. Please, read your contract, we have yet to find one that does not specifically exclude mold remediation. To our knowledge, Shugarman's Bath is the only tub and shower specialist in Southern California that is certified by the IICRC to handle suspected mold removal. If your contractor tells you they will take care of it, ask to see their IICRC certification.

Not only is Shugarman's certified, but the process is also covered under your **Never Any Extras Guarantee** so it will cost you nothing to have suspected mold removed and taken care of. When you hire Shugarman's you know the true cost of your project. Again, no surprises.

16 Is your contractor truly local?

Many of the biggest contractors in the area have been purchased by hedge funds or private equity companies. The owners of these companies usually live out-of-state in places like Florida, Massachusetts, or North Carolina. Their primary goal is profits for their investors.

At Shugarman's Bath, our goal is to make you happy. We're so passionate about this that we wrote a song about it. Shugarman's Bath is a family-owned, family-operated business. Shugarman's Bath is made up of three brothers: Chase, Casey, and Rick, and their father: Jeff, or "Dad" if you prefer. All four owners actively work in the business. All four owners also live in Southern California. We're part of the community. We have a personal interest in it. We've put our name on our company and we care deeply about holding up that name in a positive light.

We hope that this book has been educational. Whether you choose us, or any other of the many contractors serving our community, we hope that this book helps you make the best decision for your bathroom remodel. Even if you end up going with someone else, feel free to reach out to us with any questions. We're here to help.

Warm regards,

The Shugarman's Bath Family







WWW.SHUGARMANSBATH.COM | 619.488.6263 | CSLB #1060677