

Estimating Checklist

Run down this list before you send a price. Most money lost on small jobs comes from costs that never made it into the bid.

Job _____ Client _____ Date _____

Before you price

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Walked the site (or have photos and measurements you trust) | ☐ Access checked: stairs, parking, gate codes, working hours |
| ☐ Scope written down and agreed with the client | ☐ Occupied home or empty? (affects protection and pace) |
| ☐ Know who supplies materials — you or the client | ☐ Asked about older-home issues (lead paint, asbestos, old wiring) |
| ☐ Finish level clear (basic, mid, high-end) | ☐ Permit needed? Who pulls it? |

Materials

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Quantities from measurements, not guesses | ☐ Trim, transitions, covers, escutcheons |
| ☐ Waste / overage added (cuts, breakage, pattern match) | ☐ Sales tax on materials |
| ☐ Fasteners, adhesives, caulk, tape, sealants | ☐ Delivery fees and minimum-order charges |
| ☐ Primer, underlayment, backer, membranes | ☐ Current prices — not last year's receipt |

Labor

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Hours for every task, including prep and clean-up | ☐ Supply-house runs and pickup time |
| ☐ Labor burden on wages (payroll taxes, workers' comp, insurance) | ☐ Return trips: inspections, punch list, touch-ups |
| ☐ Helper or second person where the work needs two | ☐ Travel time to and from the job |
| ☐ Setup and tear-down each day | ☐ Slower pace for occupied or tight spaces |

Site protection & clean-up

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Floor, furniture and fixture protection | ☐ Daily clean-up and final clean |
| ☐ Dust control (plastic, zip walls, air scrubber) | ☐ Debris haul-off, dumpster or dump fees |
| ☐ Moving and resetting furniture or appliances | ☐ Recycling or disposal fees for old materials |

Equipment & tools

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Rentals (lifts, ladders, scaffolding, saws, compressors) | ☐ Blades, bits, sanding discs and other consumables |
| ☐ Rental delivery and pickup fees | ☐ Fuel and generator time |

Subs, permits & paperwork

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Sub bids received for every trade you're not doing | ☐ Engineering or drawings if required |
| ☐ Your markup on sub work | ☐ Certificate of insurance requested by client or GC |
| ☐ Permit and inspection fees | ☐ Retainage held back (GC jobs) and when it's paid |

Overhead & profit

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Overhead added (truck, phone, insurance, software, office) | ☐ Card processing fees if the client pays by card |
| ☐ Profit added on top of overhead — they are not the same | ☐ Price checked against your minimum job charge |
| ☐ Contingency for hidden conditions on remodels | ☐ Markup vs. margin checked (a 25% markup is only a 20% margin) |

Trade add-ons

Extra items that are easy to miss in specific trades. Check the ones that apply to this job.

Painting

- ☐ Patching, sanding and caulking before paint
- ☐ Primer coat on new drywall, stains or color changes
- ☐ Extra coat for deep or bright colors
- ☐ Masking, cutting in, and removing/resetting hardware
- ☐ Lead-safe work practices on pre-1978 homes

Drywall

- ☐ Corner bead, mud, tape and screws by the job, not by guess
- ☐ Level of finish the client expects (Level 4 vs. Level 5)
- ☐ Drying time between coats (extra trips)
- ☐ Texture matching on repairs
- ☐ Carrying sheets up stairs or through tight spaces

Flooring

- ☐ Removing and disposing of old flooring
- ☐ Subfloor leveling, patching or moisture barrier
- ☐ Pattern direction and waste for diagonal layouts
- ☐ Transitions, thresholds, base and shoe moulding
- ☐ Undercutting doors and casings

Tile

- ☐ Backer board, waterproofing membrane, niches
- ☐ Large-format tile needing a flatter floor
- ☐ Thinset, grout and sealer type for the tile chosen
- ☐ Edge trim and corner pieces
- ☐ Extra cuts around fixtures and outlets

Roofing

- ☐ Tear-off layers and disposal weight
- ☐ Decking replacement allowance (per sheet)
- ☐ Flashing, drip edge, vents and pipe boots
- ☐ Steep pitch or two-story safety setup

Plumbing

- ☐ Fittings, valves and supply lines — not just pipe
- ☐ Access: opening and patching walls or ceilings
- ☐ Shut-off issues in older homes
- ☐ Permit and inspection where required
- ☐ Haul-away of old fixtures

Electrical

- ☐ Boxes, connectors, staples, wire nuts and plates
- ☐ Fishing wire through finished walls
- ☐ Panel capacity or breaker space for new circuits
- ☐ Permit and inspection where required
- ☐ Patching after cut-ins (or who does it)

HVAC

- ☐ Line sets, pads, disconnects and whips
- ☐ Refrigerant, condensate lines and pumps
- ☐ Duct transitions, registers and sealing
- ☐ Old equipment removal and refrigerant recovery
- ☐ Permit, inspection and start-up time

Concrete

- ☐ Excavation, base stone and compaction
- ☐ Forms, rebar or mesh, expansion joints
- ☐ Short-load fees on small pours
- ☐ Pump truck or wheelbarrow distance
- ☐ Finishing, sealing and cure time

Handyman

- ☐ Minimum trip charge for small jobs
- ☐ Picking up parts the client didn't have
- ☐ A small parts allowance for each task
- ☐ Time for jobs that turn into two jobs

Not sure what to charge per hour? The free Labor Rates by State tool at awjtradeshq.com/tools/labor-rates/ shows typical wages and a billing rate after burden, overhead and profit.