

Choosing the Right Builder

MADE EASY

Did you know that many people actually spend more time researching a new laptop purchase than the builder of their future home—the largest investment one may make in his or her lifetime? An average custom home consists of roughly 82,000 assembled parts, and you will want a builder who can put each part together seamlessly, on time, and within budget. After interviewing several local builders and remodelers, we've compiled their best advice about choosing a reputable contractor and avoiding costly mistakes in the construction process.

Conduct Research

Doing proper research about a construction company prior to making your decision is absolutely necessary. Once you've narrowed your choices down to three to five builders, you can begin an in-depth research process. Start online. Read company reviews, check the records at the Better Business Bureau, consult Angie's List, and perhaps most importantly, visit the Guild Quality website (guildquality.com). If the builder in question is a Guild Quality member, reviews (good and bad) from projects in the past will be listed for you to peruse. Next, interview homeowners who have hired your potential contractor in the past. For the most part, they'll be honest with you about the details of their experience.

Tour a Recent Project

You can see many pictures online, but nothing reveals the strengths and weaknesses of a builder like standing inside one of his or her creations. If the project is still under construction, take a moment to chat with the subcontractors; they're probably the same ones that would be working on your home in the future.

Always Ask for Proof

Only trust the documents you see in writing, not what a potential contractor says. You should always ask for a copy of the company's general liability insurance and workers compensation documentation. Furthermore, ask to view a copy of the contractor's license. Finally, read the contract and budget outline completely and

intently; don't sign it until you're comfortable with everything in the document.

The Lowest Price Isn't Always the Best Offer

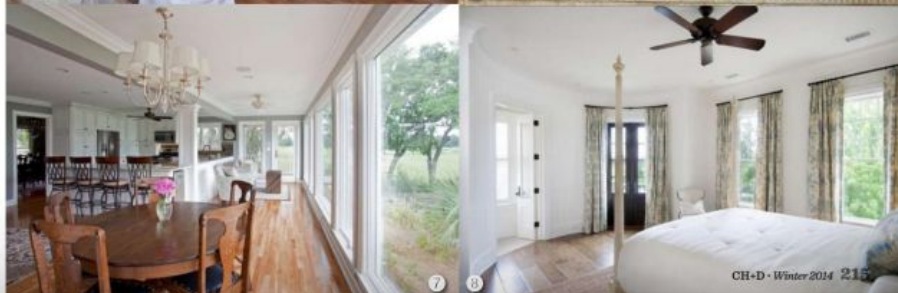
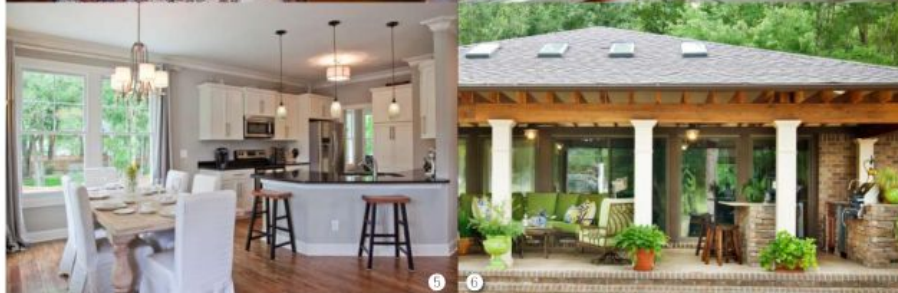
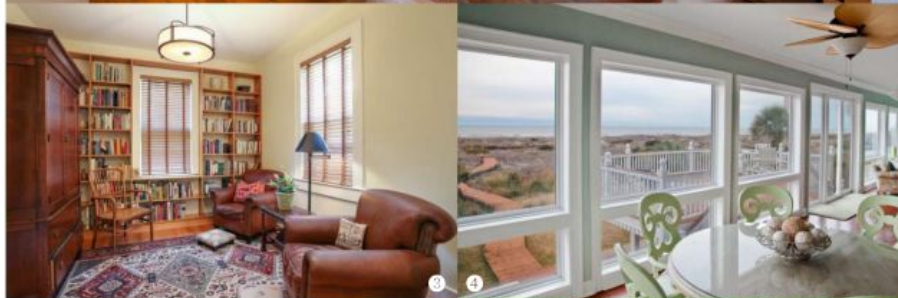
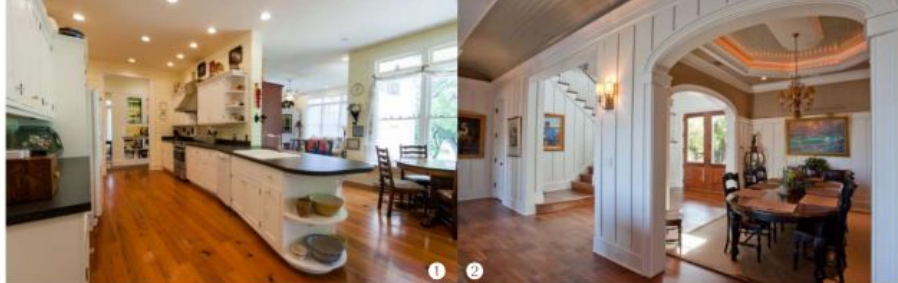
Speaking of the budget, don't just choose the lowest bidder; look for value in your purchase. A lower price often means a lower quality of materials and labor. When you review the proposed budget from each company, make sure that the money allotted to each spending allowance is reasonable. For example, if you have impeccable lighting taste, and only 2,000 dollars have been reserved for your lighting budget, you're obviously going to exceed that amount (and increase the actual cost of the home). Be realistic with your needs and wants, and realize that the lowest bidder may not be able to meet your expectations of quality.

Choose a Person You Like

The process of building a custom home is long and tedious. Whatever builder you choose will be by your side for many months, so opt for someone that you will enjoy working with. In addition to returning calls in a timely manner, possessing problem-solving skills, and exhibiting efficient time management, the contractor you hire should have a personality that complements yours.

With these tips, you should be well on your way to hiring the perfect builder for your dream home. To start your search, turn to page 233 to view Guild Quality members or to page 240 to find local builders who advertise in our magazine.

① Strock Enterprises ② Sea Island Builders ③ Classic Remodeling ④ Dynamic Design-Build ⑤ Seaport Homes
⑥ Coastal Design Builders ⑦ Priestler's Custom Contracting ⑧ Phillip W. Smith General Contractor



An Isle of Palms Home by Sea Island Builders
Right Jason Fowler, Sam Fowler, Jeff Mathis,
and James Richmond of Sea Island Builders

BUILDING BLOCKS | Sea Island Builders

The dynamic managerial team at Sea Island Builders, composed of four experienced local contractors, has been swinging hammers and constructing eco-friendly, custom Lowcountry homes since 2005. Sam Fowler (Managing Partner), Jeff Mathis (Construction Manager), Jason Fowler (Pre-Construction Manager), and James Richmond (Project Manager) sat down with *CH+D* to share a little about themselves and their company.

Do you have a favorite project that Sea Island Builders has completed?

Jeff: My favorite project has to be 950 Middle Street on Sullivan's Island because it was such a unique retrofit to a traditional Sullivan's Island home. We maintained the classic beauty of the house while giving the owners approximately 500 additional square feet in their attic and an elevated pool attached to the back of the home. We also upgraded many of the interior spaces. Most of all, I really appreciate the relationship I developed with the owners; my wife and I are great friends with them to this day.

What makes working with Sea Island Builders unique?

Jason: It's simple—the process. At the outset, we spend a significant amount of time and effort ensuring that everything is well thought out and that our clients are prepared to make fully informed decisions without rushing through any of the details. We place a great focus on project planning, which leads to a smoother and more cost-effective construction experience. Our entire process guarantees that each client receives the best service and construction experience in the industry.

What advice would you give to those seeking to build their first custom home?

Sam: Hire an experienced architect, and develop a detailed set of plans that incorporates the interior design. To give your home a completely polished look, choose a talented designer for the interior selections—from tile to window treatments. Both the architect and the interior designer are worth the money; you will be happier with the end result and will avoid making many costly mistakes along the way. When selecting a builder, ask your architect for advice, check references, and personally inspect at least two of the builder's most recently built homes to gauge the quality of his or her work.

What project are you looking forward to completing in the near future?

James: I'm looking forward to completing the Santella family's residence on Isle of Palms. This project is an extremely large renovation and addition to an older home in the Wild Dunes community. We've enjoyed collaborating with the homeowners to create a new space for their family.

For more information, call Sea Island Builders at (843) 883-7430 or visit seaislandbuilders.com.