Gravel Driveway Installation/Grading Estimate Checklist

Experienced, honest and professional driveway contractors are hard to find. I know this because after almost 2 decades in the business and several years running AllAboutDriveways.com, I've spoken to hundreds of driveway contractors from all around the country and some of them want to steer as clear from me as they can! They don't want to be held accountable for anything! Their only motivation is profits! As a matter of fact, as you go through this checklist they'll be amazed at your vast amount of knowledge about gravel driveways and grading and may even ask you how you know so much! When you tell them... "I learned from AllAboutDriveways.com", as history has proven, they may very well walk away from the job without even giving you an estimate! Why? Simply because they know they can't trick you or rip you off! ***Only the honest and ethical companies want to be associated with AllAboutDriveways.com!***

If you take this list seriously, I can assure you it will be well worth the investment of your time!

#1) Always get at least 2 to 3 estimates! ☐

Always get at least 2 to 3 estimates before making any decisions on whom to choose for your project. Of all of the complaints we receive about contractors, they usually start off with "The contractor told me we'll give you a great deal if we can get started today"! And most of the time... that was the only estimate they acquired!

#2) Is the company a member of AllAboutDriveways.com? ☐

If they say yes:

Don't just take their word for it*! Visit our website at https://www.allaboutdriveways.com/pros/ and verify they are in fact a member! Search for their company name by phone number. Be sure their company name and phone number matches EXACTLY what's on our website. There should be no variation of their name in any way. As an example, we had a member whose company name was "xxxxxx Asphalt & Concrete* ***Specialists****" and a company who claimed they were a member said they were "xxxxxx Asphalt & Concrete* ***Services****". Unfortunately... that homeowner ended up losing over $6K! Had the homeowner verified the company's membership, they would have easily identified they were* ***not*** *a member of AllAboutDriveways.com!* ***If they do not appear in search results... they are NOT a member!!***

If they are in fact a verified member:

I take what I do very seriously and ***I do more to prescreen contractors than ANY OTHER WEBSITE OUT THERE that I am aware of and I will NEVER recommend a company I don't trust on my referral list! PERIOD!***

If the company that has given you an estimate is listed as one of my Official Registered Members, I trust them and I KNOW YOU CAN TOO! If any of the companies that have provided you with an estimate are in fact a verified member... there is no need to put them through the scrutiny of the rest of this checklist!

Why not? See what contractors must endure to be listed as one of my Official Members!

Go to: https://www.allaboutdriveways.com/contractor-screening-process/

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If the company is NOT a member:

*Be sure to add a checkmark to each and every question on this list! Don't feel uncomfortable asking these questions and don't let ANY CONTRACTOR intimidate you or make you feel as if you're being too picky! After all... it's YOUR hard earned money that you're spending on your driveway. You have every right to do your due diligence! Be sure to also watch my video series or read me eBook: "**Gravel Driveway Scams: A Guide to Outsmarting Dishonest Contractors and Securing Long-Lasting Results**".*

Go to: https://www.allaboutdriveways.com/gravel-driveways/gravel-driveway-scams/

#3) How long has the company been in business? ☐

*This is a great question to ask but by no means can you just take their word for it. There are a lot of companies out there who say they've been in business for much longer than they actually have been. They may tell how long they've been **IN** the business as an answer to that question! I've been in the driveway business for 15 years... but AllAboutDriveways.com has only been in business for about 4 years! In today's internet age, a little bit of investigation online will reveal whether they're telling the truth or not! Do they have a website? Can you find reviews about their company and if you can, do the phone numbers match? On the other hand, just because the company is a new company doesn't necessarily mean that they are not experienced enough or trustworthy. At least 1 year in business is one of our requirements to list a company on our website. Consider making that one of your rules also.*

#4) Is the contractor/company supplying you with a written proposal? ☐

*I can't tell you how many times I've had a homeowner contact me to complain about their contractor and they have **nothing** in writing. **Do not accept anything but a clear and concise proposal that has all aspects of the job described in detail and is printed and signed by both you and the contractor before allowing any work to begin.** Everything discussed should be specified on the agreement or added to the agreement as an addendum. This protects you **and** the contractor. **Do not accept verbal agreements.** With a written agreement, the contractor knows exactly what you're expecting and you know exactly what you're getting and the price you're paying for it! **Do not accept a typed up email as your agreement!** Reputable companies will provide you with a written proposal on company letterhead. Written proposals will also help you compare apples to apples with other contractors that are bidding on your project!*

#5) Will the contractor/company be subcontracting the entire job, parts of the job, 1 part of the job or is the job performed all "in house"? ☐

*While on rare occasions a reputable contractor/company may have to subcontract a specialized portion of a job, **NEVER** do business with a company that subcontracts the entire job or the majority of the job. If problems arise... who's responsible and who's going to honor the warranty becomes a hot potato! No one wants to take responsibility for any mistakes or issues and you get left with a problematic driveway and a warranty that really doesn't exist! Cut out the middleman and do business with companies that perform the work "in house" with their own equipment and full time, experienced employees.*

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#6) Will the contractor/company be excavating and fine grading the driveway prior to installing the new gravel driveway? ☐

Excavating & Fine Grading: *While it's not entirely uncommon for a grading contractor to install a driveway in one day, some contractors love the "get in and get out fast" approach to maximize profits and will not grade your driveway properly before installing the gravel. This should always include excavating and grading for proper water drainage and excavating the existing soil and installing a structural/ base material to stabilize the soil and build a strong, durable base for your driveway. Make sure the contractor specifies a thickness of the base material being installed. Remember a driveway is only as goods as the base it's being installed on!*

#7) Once the base material has been installed, is the contractor going to compact it with a roller? ☐

Make sure the contractor compacts the base material with a roller for a strong durable driveway.

#8) Will the contractor/company be applying a weed inhibitor? ☐

Applying a weed inhibitor will minimize vegetation growth within your gravel driveway, particularly along the edges. This may also need to be done on an annual or biannual basis.

#9) Once the base has been installed, what type of gravel will the contractor be installing? ☐

Adding gravel or crushed granite or any other type of topping to your new driveway is not a requirement. The base material can easily be the only thing you use for your new gravel driveway ***if it's installed properly.*** *Adding gravel or crushed granite or any other type of topping is simply to add to the beauty of your home.*

Types of gravel:

There is an endless list of types and colors of gravel that can be installed on a driveway and depending on the climate you live in and the amount of ongoing maintenance you want to tolerate, the type of gravel is a very important decision. I personally prefer a crushed granite driveway as they can create a more durable, smoother surface. I'm not fond of gravel driveways that are hard to drive and walk on and the gravel gets dispersed easily. While colored gravel or even colored rock may look good, I don't believe they are practical for a driveway. They require much more ongoing maintenance.

If you live in a snowy region:

If you live in a snowy region, the smaller the gravel, the better! As a matter of fact, crushed granite is probably the best option for a gravel driveway in a snowy region as it can compact and become somewhat hard creating a surface that can be plowed without moving too much material along with the snow. A larger gravel that moves beneath your feet or car tires will get pushed off of the driveway and/or piled in the area(s) where the snow is piled. This will require annual or biannual grading, placing the piled gravel back onto the driveway.

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Be sure to also watch my video series "The Most Common Ways Gravel/Grading Contractors Rip Us Off And How To Avoid Them".

Go to: https://www.allaboutdriveways.com/gravel-driveways/gravel-driveway-scams/

Beware Of Recycled Asphalt Driveway Scams!

Go to: https://www.allaboutdriveways.com/asphalt-driveways/recycled-asphalt-scams/

#10) How thick will the contractor be installing the gravel/crushed granite? ☐

Make sure the contractor specifies a thickness of the material being installed. Again, remember... a driveway is only as goods as what it's being installed on!

#11) Is the contractor/company indicating the area in square feet or square yards on the proposal? ☐

How do you know what you're getting if the contractor doesn't indicate the square feet or square yards on the proposal? All proposals should include the total area being installed by either square feet or square yards in writing! Don't allow a contractor to indicate "from the barn to the garage" or "from the garage to the street". Proposals should always indicate the total area in either square feet or square yards.

#12) Does the contractor/company offer a warranty? ☐

The standard warranty in the industry is 1 year on workmanship and materials. Be sure to get a warranty in writing on the proposal! But remember, a warranty is only as good as the stability of the company that's offering it! What good is the warranty if the company is not stable enough to be around to honor it if something goes wrong?

#13) Is the contractor/company requiring money down? ☐

I'm not a fan of contractors asking for money up front AT ALL! *Most reputable companies do not require money up front. However, there are some areas that contractors/companies require 50% down and the rest on completion. The ONLY way I would EVER give a company money up front is just like this: Tell the contractor that the moment his trucks, employees and equipment arrive and begin unloading, you will pay them their required money down. Some contractors may be concerned that a check can be canceled. If that's the case, tell them you will pay them* ***in cash with a signed receipt! Be sure and get signed cash receipt!***

This way the company doesn't have to wait for a check to clear, they're comfortable with getting started and you're guaranteed they show up to do the job and don't take off with your money!

There's virtually zero risk for either one of you! *That's it! No other way PERIOD!*

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#14) Is the contractor asking to be paid personally rather than a company name? ☐

Just about every complaint about an unethical contractor I receive, inevitably the payment/check was made to the contractor rather than to a company. While this is not a sure sign of an unethical contractor, it should raise some red flags as it may mean they are not a registered business! I would never do business with a company that is not a legitimately state registered company.

Notes:

**This checklist is a great way to help you get as good of a job as possible but is not meant to be a guarantee of protection against unethical contractors, substandard work or improperly performed services or sub-standard materials. Patrick Mattingley or AllAboutDriveways.com is not responsible for any losses incurred in any way by using this checklist guide.*

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