

I got this idea from Fred Petito of Ivy Hill Road

Why Plumbers Charge So Much (from an old magazine article he had).

A pipe springs a leak and a plumber comes to the rescue. In a half hour or so he makes the pipe as good as new and is gone—but a week later you get a bill in the mail. In 1940 the bill might have been \$4 to \$5 in 1950 \$8 to \$10 and in the late 70s \$20 to \$25 and now in the 2000's you are lucky to pay less than \$250. The rapid rise in plumbing bills is due partly to inflation but more to the increasing complexity of the plumbing business.



For the master plumber—the man who sends you that bill—is not only an independent craftsman but a businessman with a large investment in specialized training and equipment, and a substantial overhead. He must charge his customers accordingly.

Before a plumber can hang out his shingle, he serves four to five years as an apprentice, while attending classes in subjects ranging from pipe fitting and welding to mechanical drawing and the physics of liquids and gases. At the end of this rigorous training period and after scoring passing grades on a set of state or local examinations, the apprentice graduates to journeyman.

To climb the last step up the professional ladder, he works from two to five more years, depending on his locality, and must pass a more severe set of exams. Only then is he a master plumber—that is, a businessman in his own right who possesses an official license that permits him to establish a contracting firm and to hire his own journeymen.

To receive a reasonable profit, a master plumber should net at least 5 per cent of the hourly fee he charges his customers. From his fees, the contractor deducts up to 65 per cent to pay his employees' wages, and up to 35 per cent to pay for such overhead costs as rent, office help, trucks, equipment and maintaining a large inventory of replacement parts. After meeting their

payrolls and overhead, only one in four master plumbers' nets a 5 per cent profit. The only way the other three can stay in business is on the profits from the sale of fixtures and fittings.

So we would assume the above goes for electricians and heating and air-conditioning people also. And maybe some other trades as well, but not all contractors are created equal, charge the same and have the same degree of skill. What to do, what to do? You have to



research. It could be on the web, Yellow Pages, Better Business Bureau or a few neighbors. But some way, some how you need a way to find out if the one you pick is trustworthy. Many people in the community have called me to see if I know who is a reliable

and fair carpenter, electrician, plumber, HVAC, etc. Well I don't, because I do most of my own work. So... I came up with an idea. If you used someone as a contractor or handyman would you email me their name with a rating, say, 5 as excellent, 4 – Good, 3 – Fair, 2 – Poor and 1 as fugetaboutit. I will make a list and put it on the web site so when others need someone they will at least have a place to start. Email me at [rmattsso@optonline.net](mailto:rmattsso@optonline.net), with "Ratings" in the subject line. I don't need a letter or missive but will certainly read it if you want to write it. The address and telephone number of the contractor or handyman would be appreciated.

Fred also wanted me to remind you of the basic tools you need



around the house. They would be a flat bladed screwdriver, a Philips screwdriver, a hammer, slip joint pliers, a needle nose pliers, adjustable wrench, flashlight with fresh batteries and spare reading glasses at a minimum. A box cutter, pen knife and small saw is handy also if you are sure you will not cut yourself.

As always, check this and other tips at - <http://www.aaazzz.net/id5.html>

Bob Mattsson