

What to Ask Before You Drive

When an answer is missing or fuzzy, ask before you commit the trip. Find the gap below, ask the question, and listen for a clear answer.

Scope

WHEN You can't put a rough number on the job yet.

ASK "Walk me through what you want done. Roughly how big is it, and have you picked any materials?"

A CLEAR ANSWER Size, rooms and finish level. Enough for you to ballpark it.

Budget

WHEN They haven't shared a budget, or it's well under your ballpark.

ASK "Do you have a budget in mind? Even a rough range helps me tell you if I'm the right fit."

ASK If it still isn't clear: "Jobs like this usually run about [your ballpark] for me. Is that close to what you expected?"

A CLEAR ANSWER A number or range you can hold up against your ballpark.

Timing

WHEN They didn't say when, or they want to start sooner than you're booked.

ASK "When are you hoping to get started?"

ASK If it's tight: "I'm booked about [your weeks] out. Would that still work?"

A CLEAR ANSWER A date or a number of weeks, not "soon."

Readiness

WHEN They say they're "just planning."

ASK "Are you ready to go ahead once the price works, or still gathering ideas? Either is fine. It tells me when a visit makes sense."

A CLEAR ANSWER A start window, or an honest "not yet."

Decision-maker

WHEN Someone else signs off and may not be at the visit.

ASK "Besides you, who else is deciding on this? Can they be there when I come out?"

A CLEAR ANSWER Everyone who decides, at one visit.

Location

WHEN You don't know how far the drive is.

ASK "What's the address, or the nearest cross streets?"

A CLEAR ANSWER Enough to estimate your drive time.

Photos

WHEN You want photos first and don't have them.

ASK "Could you text me a few photos? One wide shot of the space and a couple of close-ups."

A CLEAR ANSWER Photos in hand before you commit the trip.

Keep it simple

Ask one thing at a time.

A vague answer is still an open question.

If an answer shows a clear mismatch with your limits, stop there and say no politely.

Words in [brackets] are yours to fill in. Use your own numbers.