

How to choose a dock builder or marine contractor

Check site experience, insurance, permits and written scope before you choose a contractor.

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Start with the site. A contractor who installs lake docks may not be the right team for a tidal seawall. Ask for completed work with similar exposure, ground conditions and access. A good photograph does not show what is below the water.

Build a brief before you ask for quotes

Describe the boat, how you use the waterfront and what you want to change. Attach a boundary survey if you have one. Mark known utilities and access restrictions. Ask the contractor to list the information still needed before design.

Ask who owns each task: survey, geotechnical advice, design, permit applications, electrical work, installation and handover. Do not assume that a dealer's product quote includes construction or approvals.

Check the business

Ask for its legal contracting name, insurance documents and the licence required for the actual work. Verify each with the issuer. Ask whether subcontractors carry their own cover. Request references for a finished project and a project that needed repairs. Ask those owners how the contractor handled changes, water access and damage to the property.

The British Columbia private-moorage guidance shows why land permission belongs in the brief. Marine work in England can also need permission under the MMO process. Neither source confirms the rules for your own site.

Compare a complete scope

Separate materials, labour, piling or anchors, access equipment, disposal, approvals and taxes. Ask for exclusions in writing. Make the contract identify the drawing revision and product specification it prices. Require written agreement before a change is built.

Agree on handover

Request inspection records, as-built information, manuals and warranty contacts. Ask who services the system after a storm. Choose a contractor who can explain limits and missing information in plain words.

Sources

- [Province of British Columbia, Land use — private moorage](#). Public page fetched 2026-10-29. Publication date not stated unless shown on the page.
- [Marine Management Organisation, Get permission for marine work](#). Public page fetched 2026-10-29. Publication date not stated unless shown on the page.

Frequently asked questions

Does a manufacturer dealer listing prove construction competence?

No. Verify the dealer relationship and the qualifications of the team doing the work.