

# ULTIMATE GUIDE TO HIRING A SOUTH SHORE & BOSTON-AREA EXTERIOR HOUSE PAINTER

CertaPro Painters® of the South Shore and Boston

There are many reasons to hire an Exterior Painter for your Boston and South Shore home. This guide will help you understand the process and help you more easily narrow down your choice of painting contractors.

You'll learn:

## **Chapter 1: Deciding to paint your home's exterior**

**In this chapter we'll explore the following topics:**

**How do you know if you need to paint** your home's exterior?

The **benefits of painting** your home's exterior.

How our **harsh New England Climate** affects painting outdoors.

## **Chapter 2: How to choose an exterior painting company**

You'll learn how to best find a Residential Exterior Painter from the following places:

**Online reviews** - how to easily sort through all the review sites.

**Getting quotes** - what to look for in this process (hint: The behavior of the painter at this stage often foreshadows the rest of the project).

**Details of the quote** - What should be included in a good exterior painting quote?

## **Chapter 3. Services offered by exterior painting companies**

This chapter will cover:

**Defining the scope of the exterior painting job** so that all exterior painting companies are bidding on the same project (we call this "apples to apples bidding").

**Which services does a typical South Shore house need and how often?**

**Secret (free) services a painter may offer if you know to ask.**

**Setting your exterior painting budget**

## **Chapter 4: Getting inspired to paint (the fun part!)**

In this chapter you'll learn:

**Working with a designer or color consultant** to get the colors just right.

**Subtle paint touches** that'll make your home stand out from your neighbor's

**Where to find a designer** if your painter doesn't offer one.

## **Chapter 5: The final decision - choosing an exterior painter to hire**

If you've never hired an exterior painter in the South Shore and Boston area before, you might need to understand the following:

How the quoting process **foreshadows what's to come** when you hire a painting company.

Why to almost **never accept a "time and materials" bid**.

Why **wallpaper removal** CAN be quoted as "time and materials."

## **Chapter 6: The Painting Process**

**Communication** with your painter

The **details and stages of the painting process** from power washing to the final clean up

**Changing your mind** (it happens!)

Change orders or **add-ons** to the initial project

## **Chapter 7: Licenses, certifications, insurance and safety protocols an exterior painter needs to work in Massachusetts.**

Because you want the painters and your family to be safe, you'll need to make sure your Boston area Commercial Painter has the correct licenses and insurances to work in Massachusetts including:

**A RRP or EPA lead certification** if your home was built before 1978 or is known to contain lead.

**An insurance policy that is in force** (hint: some smaller exterior painting companies don't pay their insurance bill, so while they may have a Certificate of Insurance to hand to you from a previous month, they may have no actual insurance!)

**An umbrella insurance policy** - a good sign!

**A General Contractor's license** if they are doing work for you other than just painting (like carpentry or building a deck).

Checking any **safety violations with OSHA.**

A written and consistently used **safety program**

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**Chapter 8: What's next?**

## Chapter 1

### Chapter 1: Deciding to paint your home's exterior

#### Does the exterior of your home need painting?

We have developed a [20-second exterior painting quiz](#) that will give you that answer. Take the quiz, and if you don't need to paint, no need to read on unless you're interested.

#### The Benefits of Painting Your Home's Exterior

**Exterior painting increases your home value.** We do a lot of work for realtors and their clients on the South Shore, and time after time, a home that's been freshly painted will sell for more than it costs to paint it.

**Important:** If your home won't sell for more than it costs to paint it, there's no need to paint your residence! Use our handy [guide to paint pricing](#) to see the average cost to paint a home in the South Shore area.

**Painting enhances curb appeal.** You can add [subtle exterior paint touches](#) to make your home's exterior different from your neighbor's without being too bold or over-the-top.

**Painting is protective of your home's exterior surface** (usually homes in the Boston-area are made of wood, but can include vinyl, stucco, concrete and aluminum siding, and PVC composite material)

**Painting is an inexpensive "bang for your buck,"** especially if you change exterior colors. Look for a painter with a [free designer on staff who will work with you at your home to get your colors just right.](#) Repainting your home lends itself to a sense of pride!

#### How the New England Climate impacts your exterior paint project:

Our harsh winters and hot summers have a significant impact on exterior painting in our area, for example:

Exterior painting in the Boston-area is limited to the months of Spring through Fall because temperatures to paint outside need to be consistently above 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

Salt air and wind near coastal homes in towns like Quincy, Cohasset, Hingham, Hull, Scituate, Marshfield, and Duxbury impact the painting products we recommend using to paint your coastal home.

Exterior painting cannot be done when it's wet or moist. Since our New England weather is so often rainy and foggy, your Boston area exterior painter must depend on their moisture meter to determine if your home is dry enough to paint.

The hot sun of our summers beats down on our homes - especially on horizontal surfaces like deck and porch floors, causing South Shore and Boston customers to need to restrain their decks every 2 years to keep them protected and beautiful.

## Chapter 2: How to choose an exterior painting company

### Choosing painting companies to bid on your project

**Check out painter reviews online.** Google "Online reviews for painters South Shore" and see what comes up. You are looking for recent and decent reviews. Look also for online posting consistency - lots of companies might have many reviews from March 2017 and no reviews after that date. Still, you want to see customers consistently posting reviews month after month, so you get a sense that the business is consistently making their customers happy.

Once you have a few painting companies, call them to get a quote and watch how easy it is to do business with them.

The **process** a painting company has in place to arrange an appointment with an estimator often **foreshadows how the entire job will be handled** if you hire them. For example:

- Does the office staff call you back right away?
- Do they communicate by email, phone, and text?
- Is someone in the office, or are painters on the job site taking your call from a ladder (a safety no-no)?
- Is scheduling a quote easy?
- Do you have to wait weeks for an estimator to come out to quote your project?
- Do they give you a specific date and time they'll meet with you?

### Get quotes from 3 different painting companies.

Again, you are looking for professionalism in the painter because the quoting process often foreshadows how the entire process of painting your home will be handled if you hire that company.

For example:

Was the **estimator on time**?

Did they have **good product knowledge** for your type of home and climate? For example, a home directly on the coast in Cohasset would likely need a different paint product than a home more inland in Hanover, even though both houses are only 15 miles apart!

Is the **quote typewritten and detailed and includes photos**? Photos are a good indication that the painting company is meticulous about delivering on the details of the project, as photos and videos are a good way to communicate the details to the painters who will be doing the painting on your home.

Does the quote include **lifestyle details** like not working near a baby's room during naptime, letting the dog out, or not parking behind the garage? Better companies will make sure they capture these [household details](#), so the process is as smooth as possible for the homeowner.

### Some more questions to ask and make sure is written in your quote:

**What kind of paint do you recommend?** The [brand and grade of paint](#) should be spelled out in writing. If a contractor just writes "Benjamin Moore" paint, you don't know which *grade* of Benjamin Moore Paint they

plan on using. Because Benjamin Moore has a range of paints from very cheap to very expensive, you want [the grade of paint](#) specified in writing along with the brand name (for example, "Benjamin Moore Aura Paint.")

**What is included in the quote?** (again written down, so there are no surprises)

**What is excluded in the quote?**

**Is there a written warranty?** Can I have a [copy of the written warranty](#)?

**Are you [licensed and insured](#)?** If a contractor works on your home and is not insured, you, the homeowner, are liable if someone gets hurt on the job. Better yet, have them add you to their insurance policy as "additional insured" - this ensures that their insurance policy is in full force and paid up.

**When can this exterior painting project start,** and how long will it take to finish? Remember, if there is a little bit of a wait for the painter, this is a good sign that they are a busy and robust business.

**Can you meet my deadline?** If you're having a party, you may need to have the painting done by a specific time. While this cannot be 100% guaranteed because the weather in the Boston area is so inconsistent and painters can't paint in the rain. Most of the time, deadlines can be met if you let the painting company know and give them a month of notice.

**Was the estimator pressuring you to buy?** Since you are just in the quoting phase, you should just look to be educated at this point, not pressured into signing a contract.

**Some people want to hire a local painter,** so jobs stay in their community. Ensure you understand what the painting company does to [give back to the South Shore towns](#) in which they work.

**Can the painting company quote your exterior project without you being home** if you work outside the home or need to take precautions for Covid? While it's always better to meet for a quote in person, a good estimator will be able to talk to you over the phone to get the scope of the work you'd like done and walk around your exterior without you and email you a quote.

**Does the painting company offer all of the exterior services you need?**

Some painting contractors only paint. Other South Shore painters offer one-stop shopping for power washing, carpentry, and rotted wood replacement. Ensure you're getting bids from South Shore painting companies that will provide the breadth of services required to do your exterior painting project, so you don't need to hire multiple contractors for your job.

For example:

[Woodpeckers are a problem on the South Shore](#) - they consistently bore holes in our homes. If this is the case for you, ensure that your painter has a [carpenter on staff who can fix the holes or replace the wood](#).

**Rotted wood is a problem on South Shore** homes because, well, most of our homes are made of mostly wood. Again, if your window sill and trim boards contain rotted wood, you'll need a painter with carpenters on staff to handle the wood replacement before they paint.

**Bulkheads in the Boston area are often an eye-sore,** does the painter know the [type of paint that should be used on a steel bulkhead](#) to help protect and beautify it?

[Mahogany decks that are so common to the South Shore](#) need constant maintenance so they stay protected and look good. Does your painter offer deck staining services with the know-how to handle your beautiful mahogany?

Rotting trim boards are common on the wood homes on the South Shore - does your painter have a [carpenter that can replace them with PVC trim boards](#) so they don't ever rot again?

If you are thinking of changing your exterior color, look for a company with a [complimentary color consultant on staff](#) who can work with you for free at your home to get your exterior color palette just right. Working with a designer *at your house* to choose exterior colors is time well spent. The hour or two you take with a designer upfront will pay dividends for years as you drive up your driveway and love the colors you see.

If you want to change your exterior color to something that fits with the South Shore's traditional look or want someone who works on historic homes,, look for a painter with historic home experience and knowledge of [Boston historic colors](#).

Painters often specialize in different types of homes they paint - make sure you see photos of your type of home on the painter's website. For example, if you have a [Cape Cod Home](#), how much experience does the painter have painting this style?

### **Chapter 3. What services are offered by South Shore and Boston area exterior painting companies?**

#### **What exterior painting services do I actually need?**

Before you go any further, [take our quiz to see if your home needs painting at all](#). This quiz will inform you if you need to apply a coat of paint to your Boston-area home.

If you need to paint, you may also have rotting wood that needs to be fixed before the paint is applied. Never apply paint over rotted wood since the paint will quickly peel off.

You may also want to change the color of your home, so loop in a painting company that has a designer on staff that can work with you for free. Spending time up front with a designer is the single biggest way you can ensure you'll love the final result and is time well spent.

#### **Secret services your exterior painter might offer if you know to ask for them:**

While working with your estimator, be sure to remind them if you'd like to take advantage of any of the following services - oftentimes painters offer all of these, but forget to mention them during the quoting phase. For example:

[Free color-consultation](#) to help you choose colors for your exterior that are "just right." Look for a company that will have their designer come to your home to do the color consultation because you want to test the color in the light of day.



Adding you, the homeowner, to their insurance as "additional insured." This means you know their insurance is in force and paid up and protects you from having to pay out a liability or worker's comp claim if something happens on your property.

One-stop shopping for [carpentry](#) so you don't have to hire a separate carpentry crew to replace any rotted wood (window sills, trim, deck boards etc.) before you paint your home.

#### **How often do I need to paint my South Shore and Boston-area exterior?**



While some of this depends on how your house was built and what materials were used, here are some quick rules-of-thumb to use to decide when it's time to paint. [If you want to find out for sure if your home needs painting, take our 20-second quiz.](#)

All of the following are just averages - your home, depending on the materials used to build, might need a different painting schedule. Also, if you apply a maintenance coat, you "start the clock" over again on needing to paint.

**Wood houses inland** (i.e. towns not directly on the coast like Pembroke, Rockland, Hanover, Norwell, Milton, Canton, Avon, Weymouth, Braintree, Randolph Stoughton): 2 coats of paint every 7-10 years. A possible maintenance coat every 5-6 years to prolong the life of your home and freshen it up.

**Wood houses that have an ocean-view:** (i.e. homes that sit DIRECTLY on the waterfront in towns like Duxbury, Marshfield, Cohasset, Hingham, Hull, Scituate and Quincy): 2 coats of paint every 6-8 years. A possible maintenance coat every 5 years to protect the wood on your home from the coastal wind, cold and salt air.

**Wood houses in coastal towns, that do NOT have an ocean view** (i.e inland homes in towns like Duxbury, Marshfield, Scituate, Cohasset, Hingham, Hull, Quincy): 2 coats of paint every 7 years. A possible maintenance coat every 5-6 years to protect the wood.

**Vinyl-sided homes:** Since vinyl is so durable, you never really need to paint your home unless you want to change its color.

**Stucco homes:** Stucco is very durable and holds up well, but is not infallible. Most of the time stucco homes only need painting every 7-10 years or when you start seeing the stucco cracking. Stucco tudors are common in the town of Milton.

**Aluminum-sided homes:** Aluminum siding is extremely durable and usually lasts 40 years. If you are noticing chalking (rub your hand on the siding and notice if "chalk" appears on your hand), you might need to paint. Applying a maintenance coat of paint to the Aluminum siding every 5-10 years is a good idea.

### **Defining the scope of the exterior painting work**

Ensure that the specifications you give to the first painter are the same ones you give to every subsequent painter who quotes your project. For example, if you have the first painter quote a "spot prime and one coat," don't have the second painting company quote "full prime and 2 coats" because you won't be able to compare the price of the two quotes side-by-side.

**Sometimes, the project's specifications can change when you talk to another painting company** (this happens when a painting company has a different approach than the first company that bids). If this happens, have the company bid on the original work scope and add the price for the new scope of work as an optional price.

Assuming good online reviews mean a painter will be detailed, it makes sense to schedule a meeting with the painter with the best online reviews first, so they can help you develop a good scope of work for subsequent bidders.

### **Your budget will help inform the details of the scope of your exterior painting project:**

If you share your budget with your estimator, they can often find ways to stretch your budget, including:

**Less surface preparation** for homes going on the market and need a coat of paint to look fresh.

[Spraying the home and back-rolling the paint](#) costs less than rolling the house and provides just as good of a finish.

**Phasing the painting** - doing one side of your home this year and another part of your home next year.

If budget is a concern, see if the painting company gives a sense of [paint pricing](#) online. This is a way to determine how much you'll need to save to paint your home.

[Ask your painter if they offer financing](#). If you don't have the money to paint your home but need to paint (for example, because you're selling your home and need the proceeds of the sale to pay for the painting), you can often finance the painting and pay for it after your home sells.

## **Chapter 4: Getting inspired to paint (the fun part!)**

### **The fun part - getting inspired.**

You may have dozens of Pinterest photos, but nothing beats working with a [color consultant or designer](#), in-person, to make sure our painters execute on your vision.

Designers are used to advising homeowners on exterior colors and color placement, so your home looks different from your neighbor's. If your painter doesn't offer color consultation as a free service, you can ask interior designers in your town to help you. Most designers charge \$100/hour for this service which is well worth the money!

Some designers can show you [computer renderings of what your home will look like in different colors](#) - take advantage of this if you're having a hard time visualizing the final look.

**Some [design ideas](#) to get you thinking about your exterior painting project:**

Paint your window grids and trim a dark color like black, bottle green or burgundy.

Use 5+ colors on different parts of your home to make architecture and exterior features pop.



Choose a color that's unexpected, but "fits" your home's character. This home in Duxbury is painted an unexpected turquoise color, that the sweet demeanor of this home.



Paint your home all one color - a dramatic but still traditional look.

Choose a color for your front door that is "you."

**Some more resources to get your exterior painting ideas flowing:**

Check out the painting company's [portfolio of recent painting projects](#) for inspiration.

Upload a photo of your home and play with colors using [color visualizer software](#).

Don't forget to paint (or add!) some touches like [pergolas, arbors, cupolas and trellises](#) to your home. These ornamental features make a big difference in how finished your home looks.



## **Chapter 5: The final decision - choosing an exterior painter to hire**

### **Making the decision - which painting company will you hire?**

Now you've collected all of your information, and you need to use your good sense to choose a painting company.

Some ideas for this phase:

It would be best if you used ALL of the information you've acquired to discern between painting contractors, including:

Ease of estimating process - this often foreshadows how the whole project will go

Painting and product knowledge

[Online reviews](#)

The designer is free, and [color consultation](#) is included in the cost

Timing of the project to meet your deadlines

Price is fair. Seek to understand why some [painting quotes are so different in price](#).

[Written Warranty](#)

While it can be tempting to just look at the price, be sure you're selecting an exterior painting company that seems honest and reliable.

### **Time and materials quotes - almost always a bad idea:**

**One good rule of thumb:** Other than wallpaper removal there is almost never a time to accept a "time and materials" quote from a painter. A time and materials quote is an open ended quote with no firm price. The idea is that you pay the painter(s) by the actual hours they work and for materials they buy. Because of its open endedness, you are often left to clock in and clock out the painters so you are sure they are working the hours they are charging you for. Any good painter should be able to give you a firm quote just by looking at the job.

The exception to this rule is wallpaper removal, which is tricky to remove and could take lots of hours. It's almost impossible to be able to estimate how long wallpaper removal will take because your painter may not be sure of the type of wallpaper glue or sizing used to apply the wallpaper and if there are more layers underneath the top layer.

## Chapter 6: The Painting Process

### During the painting of your home's exterior:

It's important that you stay actively involved in the process to make sure the painter executes your vision for your home's exterior. In general, the following should happen:

The office staff should communicate with you an approximate start window. Since Boston weather is notoriously wet, most painters in our area won't be able to give you an exact start date.

The painting company may powerwash your home a few days prior to starting the prep and painting phase.

You will need to keep your windows closed and let them know of any leaks so they can avoid getting the inside of your home wet during the power washing.

The first day of the job should include a meeting with you to be sure everyone is on the same page.

It may have been a while since you got your quote, so reviewing the scope of work with the Job Site Supervisor to make sure the painters execute your vision is imperative. Walking around your home usually takes only 10 minutes but is one of the single best ways to prevent issues and misunderstandings.

If your painter is also [replacing rotted wood](#) so common in Boston-area homes, the carpenters may start working the first day to replace shingles, rotted trim boards, or clapboards

Painters will prepare the surface of your home according to the contract before they begin painting.

Before painting, the painters may ask you to approve the color by painting it on a small area. If you don't like the color now, you won't like it later - so speak up!

Painters will [roll or spray and back-roll](#) your home and brush-paint the detailed areas.

Drop cloths should be used outside to catch paint chips and also to protect your landscaping and decks and porches.

### Communication during the painting project

If issues arise, communicate fast with the painting company.

A good painting company will have supervisors stop at your project to ensure you are happy and the painters are painting safely.

### What if I change my mind in the middle of the job? It happens!

Communicate with your painting crew as soon as possible.

Color changes are sometimes easy if caught early on. The more the painters paint a color you don't like, the more expensive it will be to repaint that area.

If you find areas that need painting that weren't quoted initially, let the crew know you might like to add them to the job. Adding a shed or a pool house while the painters are already on-site often saves you a "trip charge" the painter might have to charge you if you paint your shed at another time.

Get all add-on quotes in writing. You may be asked to sign off on them before the crew proceeds with the work.





## **The stages of painting:**

How long the painting will take will depend on our project's specifics, but a good painter will be able to give you a rough idea of the time frame. In general a 2,500 square foot home, with a [4-person painting crew will generally take 3-5 sunny days from start to finish](#).

### **Surface preparation or "prep."**

You've heard it, and it's true - good preparation is the key to a great painting job. Prep includes:

Cleaning the surface to remove any dirt or debris - usually, this involves power or hand washing your home.

Filling the gaps with caulk and [holes caused by woodpeckers](#) of the South Shore

Sanding the surface

Taping and putting up plastic to protect areas that are not getting painted

### **Priming:**

Priming is the process of adding a special type of paint (called primer) to the exterior surface of your home to get it ready for the top coats of paint that will follow.

In some instances, priming your exterior is not necessary, but oftentimes it is a necessary step. For example, you should always prime unpainted wood. Rely on the expertise of your painter to decide if priming is essential for your exterior.

If you are adding new trim boards to your home, the carpenter should "prime the cuts" before installing them. This way the cut edges of those new boards are protected.

Depending on your contract with your painter, you'll either have no priming, a spot prime which is just priming over the areas that have bare wood showing, or a full-prime - priming over all surfaces before paint is applied.

### **Painting:**

Painting requires brushes and sprayers rollers, and it may require one or multiple coats.

The paint brand and grade is important to get right because using a [great quality paint](#) always pays dividends in the longevity of the project.

If you need your home painted quickly, ask the painter to use a larger painting crew.

Good contractors will also minimize any disruption to your household by storing their tools out of the way and using the bathroom offsite.

### **Inspection and Touch-Ups:**

After the painter applies the paint and inspects it, it's time for touch-ups.

You should walk around unhurried because you might see places that the painter "just doesn't see" after looking at your home for days on end, so point out any spots you'd like touched up.

Do your walk-around your home while it's still light out to make sure everything in the contract has been executed.

### **Cleaning up:**

This involves: Removing all tools and materials, taking down the plastic, paper, and tape, removing any exterior drop cloths.

Make sure the painter has thrown away all trash and vacuums all paint chips. Have them bring all trash home with them.

If your home had lead paint on it, clean up will involve vacuuming all of the lead paint chips up and disposing of them off-site.

### **Touch up paint:**

If there is paint leftover, have the painter label it with your exterior's different areas (i.e., shutters, doors, bulkhead) and leave it for you.

Store the extra paint in a cool, dry place and if you need to touch up the paint in the future, be sure to test it in an inconspicuous area.

The sun on the South Shore tends to beat down on our homes, especially if your house faces south, so if the color of your home fades slightly, touching up an area with 3-year old paint might cause the house to look spotty in the places you've touched up.

If you need to touch up your home a few years later, start in an inconspicuous spot at first to make sure the color still blends well.

### **Warranties**

Many painting companies offer warranties on their work. This is a good thing in the Boston area since moisture is the number one reason paint might peel.

If you have a written guarantee, you won't have to worry if this happens as long as the painter returns to fix the problem.

Even good painters have projects where the paint fails, so given the Boston climate, you must have a [warranty in writing](#).

## **Chapter 7: Licenses, certifications, insurance and safety protocols an exterior painter needs to work in Massachusetts.**

Because you want your family and the painters who paint your home's exterior to be safe, you'll need to make sure your South Shore exterior painter has the correct licenses and insurances to work in Massachusetts. It is surprising how many companies and individual painters are not insured or licensed, so it is important for you, the homeowner, to thoroughly vet the company.

Look for your painting company to have the following certifications and processes in place:

**A RRP or EPA lead certification** if your home was built before 1978 or is known to contain lead. It is not legal to paint a home that contains without being certified to renovate it because lead paint is a hazard to your family. Lead paint was phased out in the late 1970s, but you should assume all homes built before 1978 contain lead until you've confirmed it otherwise with a lead paint test kit you can get on Amazon or at Curry Ace Hardware in Hanover and Quincy.

**An General Liability insurance policy that is in force:** Some smaller painting companies don't have or pay their insurance bill. If a painter hands you a certificate of insurance, you can call the insurance company to make sure the policy is paid up and in full force. You can also ask to be added to the policy as "additional insured" which protects you even further.

**Worker's Compensation insurance should be separately listed on the insurance certificate.**

Worker's compensation is quite expensive in Massachusetts and some painting companies skip it, leaving their workers unprotected and the homeowner possibly liable if a worker gets hurt. Since painting is a physical job that involves ladders and power tools, accidents can happen and you want to be sure the injured painter can be treated and doesn't make a claim against your homeowner's policy.

**An umbrella insurance policy** is a good sign that the painting company takes protecting their customers and painters seriously.

**A General Contractor's license** is necessary if they are doing work other than painting, like building decks, sheds or other construction.

You can check if the painter has any safety violations, by [searching OSHA's database here](#).

**Ask to see a written and consistently used safety program.** Many painters say they have them, but few actually use them, so make sure there is a safety inspector that will visit your project.

All of the [South Shore Exterior Painting Contractor's license and insurance information](#) should be **on the quote and/or on their website** and easily confirmable.

## **Chapter 8: What's next in the exterior painting process?**

- **Now that you've educated yourself about exterior painting on the South Shore and Boston region, you're ready to:**
  - Contact your first South Shore, MA exterior painting contractor for your first quote.