



Get & Evaluate Heat Pump Contractor Quotes

Let's say you want to upgrade your home furnace or air conditioner to an electric heat pump that can both heat and cool your home. For most people this isn't a do-it-yourself job, (though there are some window-unit heat pumps and DIY mini-splits on the market). That means you'll need to find a contractor. Before going down this path, read Chapter 3 (pages 19-34) in our free guide, [Electrify Everything in Your Home](#), for some background on what a contractor might tell you. Also check out our [Inflation Reduction Act \(IRA\) calculator](#), to see what federal funds you might be eligible for.

Efficiency first

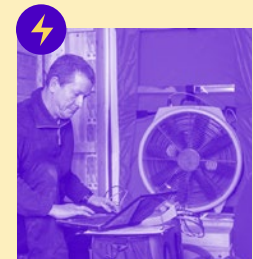
Start by getting an energy audit (aka home energy assessment). Check with your utility to see if they'll help pay for it. The Inflation Reduction Act offers a 30% tax credit (up to \$150) for an energy audit. And this audit might reveal air sealing, insulation improvements, and other upgrades that can help save you energy (and money!) right away.

Note that if you're considering adding insulation, you should do air sealing first! And if you have ducts, in your attic or basement, you might also need to do duct sealing or have them insulated, including being buried by insulation in an attic. In that case, find a heat pump contractor and work with them on insulation before you have it done, so you don't need to have it redone.

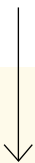
To find a heat pump contractor

→ Ask for suggestions and referrals from your friends, neighbors, co-workers, and local trade organizations.

⚡ Aim to get proposals from at least three contractors, as quotes can vary by thousands of dollars for the same project!



Start by getting an energy audit (aka home energy assessment) with a “blower door test”.



- ⚡ Check for online reviews by searching for “[NAME OF CONTRACTOR] + angi” or search for the contractor on Yelp.
- ⚡ Search for ACCA (Air Conditioning Contractors of America) Quality Assured Contractors in their [directory](#).

- You might be inclined to just use the contractor you’ve always used, but consider at least getting quotes from others for comparison!
- You might need to use a pre-approved contractor to claim some rebates, so check with your state and utility for rebates.
- For central heat pumps, consider reaching out to a local HVAC distributor for major brands (such as Carrier, Bryant, Mitsubishi, Fujitsu, Trane, and American Standard) and asking which contractors buy a lot of “inverter-driven heat pumps.”
- Before calling for quotes, know the model of your current system — you can take a picture of the info plate on your furnace or air conditioner. If possible, know the maintenance history of your machines. And be prepared with a list of comfort issues you might want to fix in your home (e.g. rooms that are too hot or too cold, high humidity, etc.).

Screening questions

When calling contractors to schedule an appointment, ask these questions:

- What types of inverter-driven (aka variable capacity) heat pumps do you sell? What percentage of your business are they?

Note: *Inverter-driven heat pumps are recommended, since they can widely vary their output and be much more efficient than “single-stage” versions that are only fully on or off, or “two-stage” versions that are either on high, medium, or off.*

- Are you going to do a “Manual J” load calculation? If not, how are you going to size the heat pump?

Note: *If any ducts are being modified or you have comfort complaints, they should also do a room-to-room airflow calculation.*

- Do you know about available incentives or rebates, and will you provide assistance in applying for them?

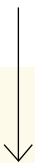
Note: *Some rebates have minimum performance requirements, so your contractor should offer at least one option that meets them.*



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Evaluation questions

When engaging with a contractor, there are a number of questions you can ask:

- Here's a list of questions from [Electrify Now](#). For help comparing quotes use ACCA's [Quality Installation Checklist](#) or ENERGY STAR's [Bid Comparison Checklist](#).
- Ask each contractor to provide multiple equipment options, including better performance equipment that might cost more upfront, but will pay back over time.
- Request references from other clients, then don't be shy and actually call those references!
- If you're planning to #ElectrifyEverything in your home, ask your contractor for help planning this so you don't end up needing an unexpected \$5,000 panel electrical upgrade later! Many houses can go all-electric with a 100A panel, as laid out in this [detailed guide](#). Request more efficient units that use less power. And if you're getting a central heat pump, ask them to put the outdoor unit on the same circuit as the indoor air handler.

Understanding a quote

When you get your quote, it should have written, itemized estimates for everything that will be included, such as:

- specific brand and model numbers for all equipment that will be installed, including both indoor and outdoor equipment, plus all relevant specs;
- itemized lists of any other parts and accessories that you'll be charged for;
- a schedule of payments for the complete job — in dollars and cents and NOT percentages;
- a down payment (if any) that doesn't exceed \$1,000 or 10% of the contract, whichever is less.

Things to look out for

As a general rule, it is better to slightly under-size a heat pump for your home. Not only will smaller systems be less expensive, they'll also work better in all seasons by better matching the output to your comfort needs. This is why a Manual J load calculation (that you pre-screened your contractor for) can be so helpful in sizing the equipment.

If you live in a cold climate, you should get a cold-climate heat pump (you can find a list [here](#)). Modern versions work well even when it's below 0°F outside. Understand whether the heat pump will be fully heating your whole home, or if you'll keep a backup heating system.



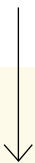
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If you're getting a "mini-split" heat pump, ask your contractor what your options are for the indoor unit — including a high-wall unit, low-wall unit, ceiling cassettes, and even ducted units that can reach multiple rooms.

Installed heat pump cost estimates

We've analyzed data from Massachusetts and California, and found that the median cost of a single-zone heat pump is around \$6,400 for one indoor unit and one outdoor unit that works for under 1,000 square feet. The median cost of a whole-home heat pump that can replace your furnace is around \$13,000 for a unit that works for around 1,500 square feet. There would be additional costs for new ducts, a cold climate heat pump, and larger houses.

Heat Pump Rebates & Tax Credits

- Check to see if your state or utility offers rebates for heat pumps. It might save you another \$1,000 to \$2,000, though some states offer much higher rebates (e.g. [Massachusetts](#) offers either \$16,000 (income-qualified) or \$10,000 (every one else) to help pay for a whole-home heat pump).
- The federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) offers an annual 30% tax credit (up to \$2000) for advanced heat pumps that meet high efficiency requirements. These tax credits are available now.
- If you're income-qualified, the IRA also includes up to \$8,000 in upfront rebates for a heat pump, and that program will be rolling out in late 2023/early 2024 through your state, so search for "[STATE NAME] + inflation reduction act rebates" for more info.

Negotiating the best quote

Contractors are often hard-working small business owners trying to make a living, and have costs beyond just the hardware they're selling you. That said, you can use the part numbers provided on your quotes to search online for any retail prices. If you add them all up (accounting for all indoor and outdoor units), that'll give you a sense of the total equipment cost. If the quote is more than 4 times bigger than the equipment costs, it's probably too high — keep looking for another contractor.



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Signing the Contract

Before any work gets started, make sure to sign a written proposal. And don't sign anything until you're clear on what you're paying for, and what you're getting.