

CATEGORIES OF CONTRACTORS

	A	B	C	D	
FOR STRUCTURAL SOUNDNESS	Bulk earthworks to be carried out in compliance with specification (compaction to be done by means of at least a vibrating roller):	✓	✓	X Although Smartstone doesn't recommend the use of a plate compactor for earthworks, when being used it should be one of at least 150kg.  Will increase cost.	X Making use of hand stampers and small plate compactors, or even no compaction whatsoever.
	Layer works designed by an engineer:	✓  This costs money.	X	X	X "I've been in this game for xx years. I know what I'm doing."
	Imported sub base(s) material and compaction to specification:	✓	✓  This will cost more.	X SmartStone doesn't recommend installing paving without an imported sub base. If not, at least ensure that the natural earth is of good quality and properly compacted when moist. Reputable contractors will always discuss soil conditions	X No consideration of soil conditions.
	Sub base stabilisation to specification:	✓	✓	✓ or X Although Smartstone strongly recommends stabilisation, at least discuss it with the contractor. If he doesn't know what it is, don't use him.  This will however cost more.	X "Huh?"
	Engineered drainage plan:	✓	✓	✓ or X A better contractor will discuss the drainage plan in detail.	X "We'll determine it while we're installing. I've been in this game for xx years."
	Durable edge restraints:	✓	✓	✓ or X A good contractor would describe various options in detail. If he wants to do troweled edges in situ, don't use him.  Durable edge restraints will be more expensive.	X Troweled concrete edges will fail within a year.
	Correct Bedding according to specification:	✓	✓	✓ or X For cobbles, good contractors will use moist, good quality, washed river sand, which is at least 25mm thick when screeded. For flagstones, good contractors will use a 50mm riversand/cement screed.  Quality bedding material will be more expensive.	X The use of too little and the wrong type of bedding material is very common. This will cause site failure.
FOR AN AESTHETICALLY PLEASANT FINISH	Handling pavers with care:	✓	✓	✓ or X For cobbles, ensure that wheelbarrow tipping is not allowed. Flagstones should be carried individually by hand.  Careful handling will be more time consuming and therefore more expensive.	X Careless handling of pavers such as throwing and dumping will damage and scuff them.
	Precision cutting of pavers:	✓	✓	✓ or X SmartStone recommends the use of a masonry saw or angle grinder with a diamond tipped blade.  Will add to the cost.	X Cheap blades and bolsters give a rough finish.
	Levelling of pavers with rubber mallets or a plate compactor prior to grouting:	✓	✓	✓ or X For cobbles, plate compaction (levelling) must be done before and during grouting with sand. A compactor with a rubber mat must be used. Flagstones must be levelled with rubber mallets when being laid.  More time consuming therefore more expensive.	X "Hiring a plate compactor is expensive."
	Checking and adjusting lines and pavers:	✓	✓	✓ or X A better contractor will do this.  It is time consuming and time is money.	X Paving lines and the paved surface will be crooked and uneven.
	Careful grouting:	✓	✓	✓ or X Ensure the contractor has a method of combating cement staining when grouting. When grouting with sand ensure that the contractor re-grouts in seven days.  This will cost more.	X Paving will be stained and the installation a disaster if grouting isn't done properly.
	Use a special grouting for Flagstones:	✓	✓	✓ or X Grouting failure on flagstone installations is one of the most common failures in our industry. Ask how the contractor will combat this. Better contractors will offer alternatives to standard cement grouting or at least have some measure to cover wet grouting in order for it to cure more slowly.  This will cost more.	X "In xx years I haven't had any problems with grouting."
	Competent Supervision on site:	✓	✓	✓ or X  Proper supervision costs money.	X "I supervise my six teams personally."
FOR A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE	Prompt rubble removal:	✓	✓	✓ or X Always ask if it is included in the quote.	X "My truck broke down. It should be fixed by next week."
	Answering his phone, even after installation:	✓	✓	✓ or X Ensure the contractor has a landline number and legitimate physical address. Cellphone calls can easily be avoided.	X "Hi. This is Jo Bloggs from Jo's paving. Please leave your name and number and I'll get back to you as soon as possible."
	Will take responsibility when things go wrong:	✓	✓	✓ or X Ensure that the contractor belongs to an industry body like the CMA or MBA, who can intervene when necessary.  Membership fees are payable to industry bodies.	X "Hi. This is Jo Bloggs from Jo's paving. Please leave your name and number and I'll get back to you as soon as possible."
	Requires large deposit:	X	X	✓ or X If the contractor wants more than 50% upfront, you are at risk.	✓ "The bricks are the most expensive item and I have to pay cash upfront for them."
	Toilet on site:	✓	✓	✓ or X Better contractors will always discuss facilities prior to installation.	X "My guys don't generally need a toilet."
	Cleanliness and professionalism:	✓	✓	✓ or X Better contractors have workers with clearly identifiable industrial clothing.  This costs money.	X They'll just wear what they wore when the "contractor" picked them up at the hardware store's gate.
	Have good admin and systems:	✓	✓	✓ or X How is it possible without a physical address or office?  This costs money.	X "If you pay cash, I won't charge you VAT."
Will try to swing quality pavers to a cheaper product from an unreliable supplier:	X	X	✓ or X As with contractors there are also reasons why one supplier might be more expensive than another.  Quality costs more.	✓ "All bricks are the same. These cost less because the manufacturer doesn't advertise."	
THE TAKEOUTS	LIFE EXPECTANCY OF PAVING:	Commercial paving is guaranteed to last a lifetime.	Residential paving is guaranteed to last a lifetime.	Paving will last but sagging, ponding and edge failures might appear very early on if any of the above aspects are not adhered to.	Paving will fail.
	PRICE OF INSTALLATION:	MOST EXPENSIVE Engineers are expensive but their responsibility is extensive regarding the supervision of construction and evaluation of site conditions.	SECOND MOST EXPENSIVE It costs money to create good infrastructure.	A CHEAPER OPTION Generally these contractors walk a fine line in order to be price competitive.	CHEAPEST OPTION Naturally they'll be the "cheapest".
	MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE:	Contractors who comply with international standards of installation. COMMERCIAL PAVING	Contractors who comply with international standards of installation. RESIDENTIAL PAVING	Common practice by South African contractors.	Opportunistic contractors.