



5 Good Reasons to Hire a Pro

There's nothing terribly complicated about connecting a DVD player to a TV. Nor is there anything tough about running wire to a pair of speakers on the patio. With the help of a manual, some people might even be able to configure a computer network or program a remote control to operate every piece of equipment in a home entertainment system. But when it comes to the design and installation of most electronic systems, it's best to leave the job to a trained professional.

Known as a home systems installer or electronics integrator, this individual functions just like any contractor you might hire to work on your home. Like a carpenter who remodels the basement or an interior designer who updates your family room, a home systems installer

knows how to make your house perform and look better. He just happens to accomplish this by adding electronic systems into the space.

1. They Understand Technology

Most home systems installers live and breathe technology. It's their passion. They attend trade shows to learn about new systems and take courses to expand their knowledge of all things electronic for the home. These activities have become necessary parts of a home systems installer's job description. They are essential to fully understanding the types of technologies that are best for each client's home and how to design and install the systems so they work without a hitch.

So while you may not be able to tell a wid-

The design and installation of electronic systems into a home is typically a team effort. Most home systems installation firms include salespeople, engineers, programmers, designers and installers.

et from a thingamabob, a home systems installer not only knows the difference but can also tell you why one is better than the other. Try comparing the specifications listed on the placard of two big-screen TVs, and you'll quickly realize just how difficult it is to comparison shop.

A home systems installer's breadth of knowledge runs very deep. While his specialty might be audio systems or security systems, he probably knows a lot about lighting control systems, home management systems, heating and cooling systems, home theater systems and networking systems as well.

2. They Know What Works

"Compatibility" is a big buzzword in the home systems business. In this context, it means that electronic products should work well together, regardless of make, brand, style or function. When products are compatible, your entire house functions better. For example, a security system could instruct a lighting control system to illuminate the backyard whenever an outdoor motion sensor is triggered. Similarly, compatibility enables a keypad to operate the home theater equipment as well as the lights in a room. Home systems installers are experts at forging alliances between different types of electronic products. From experience, they know which devices work well together. Their engineering skills allow them to design and install the products so that they act as one unified system.

3. Quality Craftsmanship

What's the best way to hide the wire that connects your family room stereo system with a pair of speakers in the bedroom? Should you tuck it up next to the wall? Or maybe you should yank it up into attic and pray that you can fish it across the beams without doing too much damage to the ceilings. A home systems installer has all kinds of installation tricks up his sleeve that actually work—and not only for concealing wire. He also knows how to plant speakers into the walls without ruining a paint job, how to turn a coat closet into a storage space for an assortment of audio and

video gear and the best way to hang a plasma TV. Certainly, an installer's knack for getting products into place is important. However, a professional installer's design skills are what really set him apart from a do-it-yourselfer. A home systems installer can look at a room or even a blueprint of a room that's under construction and identify the best spot for a TV, speakers and a lighting control keypad, for example. He can tell by the way the sun shines through the windows where your electrician should plant recessed light fixtures. He knows the best color to paint a home theater and can coordinate the construction of an entertainment cabinet that will be the perfect size for the widescreen TV you selected.

4. Extended Service

Electronic systems are not perfect, even when they are installed correctly. A home systems installer can offer the assurance that if and when you do encounter problems with a product, there's somebody there who can help you. Many offer simple fix-its, like adding CNBC to your list of favorite TV channels on your remote control, free of charge. And you can always call your installer if your TV refuses to turn on or if the security system starts beeping uncontrollably. He might be able to tell you over the phone that you pressed the wrong button or that it's time to change the batteries in your security sensors. For more-complicated modifications, like adding another room onto your home control system, an installer will probably charge you for both time and labor. Still, it's good to know that there's someone you can turn to long after the project is complete.

5. So You Don't Have To

Even if you did possess the skills, knowledge and expertise of a home systems installer, would you really have the time to buy, design and install a home theater, a security system or any other type of electronic system into your home? There's a reason why people hire someone to do these jobs. To get it done ... and to get it done right.

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