



The Estimating Sequence

- **Acquire your contract documents**
 - The majority of project documents are available electronically. Organize your downloaded project documents to folders in a server or cloud location as designated by your company. You can prebuild a project folder template that you can use each time for efficiency.
 - If only printed sets of project documents are available, obtain all the drawings, specification books, and pre-bid issued addendums for each project.

- **Organizing your estimate**
 - If your company uses a CRM or bid tracking software for this process is relatively easy, and you follow your company's procedures for setting up and tracking your bids.
 - If you don't have specific tracking software, you can still correctly organize your estimates.
 - You can use products like Microsoft Excel, Word, and Outlook to assist you
 - Create an estimate (bid) number.
 - It is best practice to use a numerical system for keeping records of estimates.
 - An estimate number can be used in your estimating program, file structure on your company's server or cloud, or your estimate log.
 - If you are handling a lot of paper with the estimate, set up an estimate three-ring binder. When working on smaller projects such as service-type projects, a manila file folder will suffice.
 - This will keep your work organized and readily available for review.
 - Use your electronic calendar and add dates for any pre-bid meeting, bid date, and other meeting times.

- **Submit bonding request early (if applicable)**
 - Sometimes a project requires a bid bond is sometimes needed. Bonding companies will require basic information about your projects, including; approximate value, start date, completion date, and liquidated damages.
 - Usually, this information can be found in Division 01 of the project specifications. This will most likely need to be done before you have fully prepared your estimate, so you will need to give the bonding company an approximate budget.

- **Pre estimate planning**
 - Planning and organizing your time is a must, so determine how long it will take to complete each estimate. As a rule of thumb, you should allow two to three hours per drawing. That timeframe includes reading specifications, sending out material requests, and entering a complete takeoff into your estimating program.

- **Building your estimate**
 - The estimate structure
 - Bid Item
 - Section your estimate as base bid and any alternates you come up with, allowing you to break out any add or delete alternates easily.
 - System
 - If you have different types of systems on a project, you should set them up separately.
 - Phase
 - This is used for different roof areas on the project. Projects with sections that will be completed at various times will require a phase breakdown.
 - Area
 - Bidding projects with multiple buildings, you can use the area to identify each building on the project.
 - Drawings
 - Breaking down a project by drawings is helpful. Especially true if the drawings break down a project by area. This allows you to know labor hours per area.

- **Vendor, manufacture, subcontractor pre-quote process**
 - A good time early the estimate is to scan through your specifications and drawings to see what special products or subcontractors you may need to prepare your cost estimate accurately. By giving them enough notice, you stand a much better chance of getting the best price back before bid day.

- **Build Your Estimate from the Ground Up**
 - After preliminary set up, it is time to start assembling your estimate
 - The best approach to completing a quantity takeoff is to follow the order of the actual construction, from the deck to finished cap flashing. This will provide you a clear mental snapshot of the project.
 - If a project consists of multiple buildings, perform a separate quantity takeoff for each building for a more accurate project estimate.

- **Quantities, Keep Uniform and Consistent**
 - A quantity takeoff is a continuous list of items and measurements. Keep your quantity as consistent and straightforward as possible. If estimating in spreadsheets, this is especially important.

- **Getting the Scale Right**
 - Check the plans carefully for changes in scale and plans reduced from their original scale. Check for notes such as "NTS" (Not to Scale) or discrepancies between plans and specs.
 - As you proceed through your takeoff, it doesn't hurt to do some mental arithmetic if a quantity or measurement seems off. Designers can make mistakes too. You should verify your plan scale and measurements with the detailed floor plan that has the dimensions on it.
 - This is an excellent way to confirm that the roof plan scale is accurate.

- **Add your cost items**
 - Materials
 - Labor
 - Subcontractor costs
 - Equipment
 - Any other costs

- **Check, review, and analyze your estimate.**
 - Check your estimate for any omissions. If your company uses estimating software, the program should allow you to print a materials report. Review your report, looking for items that may have been missed during the takeoff process.
 - Check for material mistakes. The most common mistakes are the duplicated and missing items.
 - Analyze your estimate, and make any necessary adjustments. An important principle in estimating is to focus on what matters. That means you must identify where the most significant risks are in the project — both in material and labor.
 - Check your estimate labor per phase or item. When the estimate is broken down by stages such as safety set up, job set up, roof tear-off, roof installation, flashings, etc., the hours for each step can easily be determined. The estimator that does this consistently will notice a pattern of hours per process—an excellent and consistent way to check an estimate.
 - The labor must be checked and adjusted for installation difficulty.
 - All quoted materials must be checked and verified. Quotations must be checked for accurate quantities and lead times. When working on projects with aggressive schedules, long lead-time items may require extra costs to expedite the delivery date.

- **Review all addendums.**
 - Most projects have addendums issued during the bidding stage. You first must check that you have received all addendums on your project. Most addendums will address multiple trades under each addendum.
 - You must carefully review and address all items for your divisions in your estimate. Addendums can affect material and labor pricing. They can address things such as the project's schedule, phasing, staging areas, allowances, and working hours.

- **Final estimate review**

- This review should be done with the company's director of estimating or whom they designate as your department head.
 - Reviewing the estimate with the director of estimating is necessary to bid on a project correctly. The estimator must prove to the director of estimating that the takeoff is properly quantified, materials priced to specification requirements, and labored per the project conditions.
 - Upon final review, the selling price can be set.

- **Proposal**

- Your proposal or scope letter is your terms and conditions of the bid. It is vital to have a clear scope letter with your quotation.
- Your scope letter to the owner or general contractor should include the following that is pertinent to your project.:
 - Base bid
 - Alternates – indicate if they are additions or deletions
 - List the drawings you quoted from including dates, and any revision numbers
 - Specification sections covered by your quote
 - List of addendums and dates received and included
 - Length of time your quote is valid
 - Change order or back charge policy
 - Delay clause
 - Exclusions or inclusions
 - Payment terms
 - Your company's "Terms & Conditions" included at the end of the quote