

The Art of the Estimate, a New Plumbers Guide

written by Vicky Barry | September 4, 2024



Alright, young apprentice, gather 'round! It's time to learn **The Art of the Estimate** – not just numbers, but the secret sauce that makes you a plumbing legend and a plumbing profit wizard.

1. The 1st Question to Ask? What You're Really Selling?

- **"Peace of Mind:"** You're not just fixing a leak; you're preventing a flood. You're the hero keeping their basement from becoming an unexpected swimming pool.
- **"Your Expertise:"** You've seen it all – from the tiniest drip to the mightiest gush. Your experience is your superpower. You'll use the right tools and the appropriate parts to get the job done right the first time.
- **A Dry Future:** You're not just patching; you're promising a future where water stays in pipes, not on floors. Where a glog stays unclogged, where that gas line remains leak free and safe.

2. An Inspection of The Unseen, Preventable Problems:

- **Hidden Horrors:** Pipes love to play hide and seek, you fix one leak and another on springs up further down. Always expect there's more lurking behind that wall or under that floor. With a proper inspection as part of your estimate, you are preventing future issues and saving the homeowner unwanted headaches.
- **Remember to include a small Buffer Zone:** Think of this as your "just in case" fund. Because, trust me, there's always a "just in case."

3. Crafting Your Masterpiece:

- **Tell a Story:** Make your estimate exciting. “Imagine your bathroom, not just fixed, but transformed into a sanctuary of serenity.”
- **Make It Real:** Even the oldest, creakiest pipes can be rejuvenated. Make them believe in the magic of your wrench.
- **Room for Twists:** Just like a good movie, your estimate needs space for unexpected plot developments.

4. Your Guide to Estimating:

- **Know Your Market:** What are other plumbers charging? You don't want to be the plumber who charges a fortune for a simple unclogging, but at the same time you don't want to leave money on the table. My rule of thumb is 1st time customers get your best price to earn their business and trust. Once a relationship is established, it's save to come up to market value, so long as your quality is as good as the competition
- **Break It Down:** Show them, with as much detail as possible, what they're paying for. From the first knock on the door to the final twist of the tap. Customers appreciate a better understanding of what led to the charges, such as travel time, fuel, etc.

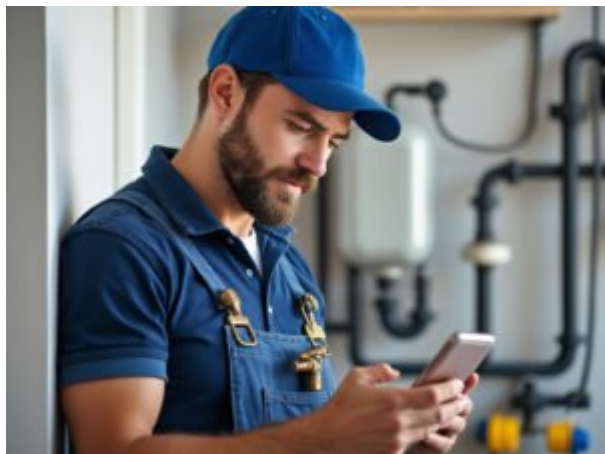
5. The Final Estimate Flourish:

- **Look the Part:** Your estimate should look as professional as you are. Maybe not a work of art, but definitely not a doodle on a napkin. Use tools such as [Selling Lane](#) to build and [present your menu](#) of options.
- **Believe in Yourself:** Deliver your estimate like you've just solved the plumbing puzzle of the century. Because, let's face it, you probably have.

#PlumbingApprentice #PricingLikeABoss #TheArtOfTheEstimate

[The Plumbing Code: Secrets to Legally Awesome Plumbing](#)

written by Vicky Barry | September 4, 2024



Welcome back, my plumbing apprentice! Today, we're diving into the world of plumbing code, the unsung heroes of our trade. (yes, I've said that out loud) Think of codes as the script to the plumbing blockbuster you're starring in. Ignore them, and you're not just risking your job; you're setting yourself for failure. Some plumbers tried to circumvent the code, but the ones that survived the longest tend to embrace the code and become the building inspector's friend. As a result, they get more jobs, they get less stress, and they make more money. This is part of the [10 Essential Plumbing Tips Every Apprentice Must Know](#). Check it out.

Why Plumbing Codes Matter

Plumbing isn't just about making water flow where it should. It's about safety, health, and ensuring that your work stands the test of time and inspectors. Codes are the rules that keep our work from becoming the next episode of "When Plumbers Go Wrong." They're like the GPS for your plumbing journey, guiding you through the maze of pipes, fixtures, and vents.

The Plumbing Code Commandments

1. **Know Your Local Codes:** Just like dialects change from town to town, so do plumbing codes. What's kosher in Kansas might get you a citation in California. Always start with local regulations. They're your bread and butter.
2. **Pipe Sizing:** Ever heard of the Goldilocks principle? Your pipes need to be just right. Too small, and you're looking at clogs and pressure issues. Too big, and you're wasting materials and money. Codes help you find that sweet spot.
3. **Venting:** Venting isn't just about letting air in; it's about preventing a vacuum that could suck water out of traps, leading to sewer gas in your client's home. Codes dictate how and where these vents should go, ensuring your work doesn't turn into a stinky situation.
4. **Fixture Spacing:** There's an art to where you place your toilets, sinks, and showers. Codes ensure there's enough space for maintenance, usage, and that your bathroom doesn't look like it was designed by someone who's never seen a bathroom before.
5. **Materials:** Not all pipes are created equal. Codes tell you what materials are safe for what purposes. PVC in one place might be a no-go

in another due to temperature or chemical exposure.

The Plumbing Code Chronicles

Imagine you're building a castle, but instead of swords and dragons, you're dealing with pipes and permits. Your codes are your blueprint, ensuring your castle doesn't crumble under the weight of legal scrutiny or actual water pressure. Here's how to navigate them:

- **Study Regularly:** Like any good story, codes have sequels and updates. Keep up with them. There are courses, seminars, and online resources. Make it a habit.
- **Ask Questions:** If something in the code confuses you, ask. Whether it's a senior plumber, a code official, or an online forum, don't let confusion lead to violation.
- **Document Everything:** Keep records of your work. If you're ever questioned, you want to pull out your "code compliance" folder faster than a magician pulls a rabbit from a hat.
- **The Code as Your Ally:** Use codes to your advantage. When a client asks for something that's not up to code, you're not just saying no; you're protecting them from future headaches.

The Apprentice's Code

Remember, apprentice, every code you learn is a tool in your belt. They're not there to stifle your creativity but to channel it into safe, effective, and legal plumbing solutions. When you master the codes, you're not just a plumber; you're a plumbing knight, sworn to protect homes from the dark forces of leaks, floods, and health hazards.

So, embrace the codes. Study them like you would the latest action flick. Because in the world of plumbing, knowing your codes isn't just about passing inspections; it's about crafting a legacy of work that stands firm against time, tide, and the occasional overzealous inspector.

Stay tuned for more adventures in the plumbing realm, where every turn of the wrench could be a turn in your epic saga. Until next time, keep your codes close and your pipes closer!

Plumbing Code References:

- [International Plumbing Code \(IPC\)](#) – Your bible for plumbing codes.
- [National Standard Plumbing Code \(NSPC\)](#) – Another key text in your plumbing library.

The Most Profitable Tool For Plumbers, The Drain Snake

written by Vicky Barry | September 4, 2024



Welcome, my apprentice, to the sacred art of drain snaking, where patience meets precision, and where you, the plumber, become the hero of the household. Today, we delve into the world of the drain snake, your best friend in the plumbing universe and your quick job profit maker.

The Philosophy of the Snake

“The snake is your friend” isn’t just a catchy phrase; it’s a lifestyle. In the words of the great philosopher, [Douglas Adams](#), “**Don’t Panic!**” should be your mantra when facing a clogged drain. Panic leads to the dark path of chemical drain cleaners, which, as we know, can be as destructive and environmentally, unsafe. Instead, embrace the snake, for it offers a gentle, yet firm, solution to your clogged drain problems.

The Profit in Snaking:

A good friend of mine is a plumber, but only does one thing: Snaking Drains. Because its usually an easy job and its quick profit. For the enterprising plumber starting out, armed with nothing but a trusty snake and a willingness to dive into the murky depths of household plumbing, the profit potential is surprisingly robust.

Imagine this: each unclogging job, a battle against the unseen forces of hair, grease, and who-knows-what, can fetch you anywhere from \$150 to \$400, depending on the severity of the clog and your locale’s pricing norms.

*Forbes Magazine wrote an article on Roto-Rooter and said "Their services cost upwards of \$100 for smaller projects to over \$3,500 for larger projects. On average, however, expect to pay **between \$160 and \$575.**"*

Now, if you're the kind who can charm a snake (the plumber's kind, not the garden variety) through pipes with the finesse of a maestro, you might find yourself averaging 15 jobs a day, like our friend from the [X_posts](#). That's potentially \$6,000 a day, though let's not get too carried away with our abacus; even half that, and you're looking at a lucrative venture. Remember, though, this isn't just about the snake; it's about your reputation, your speed, and your ability to not gag at the sight of what comes out of those pipes. So, with a bit of marketing savvy (perhaps avoiding the term 'snake' in your ads), you could snake your way to a profitable business, one drain at a time.

Understanding Your Snake Tool (no joke intended)

A drain snake, or plumber's snake, is not just a piece of metal; it's an extension of your will. As the famous plumber, Mario, once said, albeit in a different context, "Let's-a go!" – this should be your battle cry when you pick up your snake. It comes in various forms, from the basic hand-cranked model to the mighty electric snake, each designed to tackle different beasts lurking in your pipes.

The Plumbers Snake Technique

1. **Preparation:** Before you dive in, remember, "[Measure twice, cut once](#)" applies here too. Assess the situation. Know your enemy and more specifically how far down the pipe it might be. Is it a slow drain or a complete blockage? This will dictate your approach.
2. **Insertion:** Gently insert the snake into the drain. Think of it like threading a needle, but instead of fabric, you're dealing with the fabric of the household's sanity, there is nothing worse than doing more damage than good. My father used to say, be forceful, but not bullish.
3. **Manipulation:** Here's where the magic happens. As you feed the snake, feel for resistance. This isn't just about brute force; it's about finesse. You're not just pushing; you're probing, feeling, and sometimes, gently persuading.
4. **Retrieval:** Once you've broken through the clog, slowly retract the snake. This part is like pulling Excalibur from the stone – dramatic, satisfying, and often, a bit messy.

The Wisdom of the Plumbers Snake

"[Water flows downhill](#), but clogs can make it stubborn," as the saying goes in plumbing circles. The snake teaches us that sometimes, the solution isn't about adding more force but finding the right path. As Sun Tzu (Art of War) might have said if he were a plumber, "Know your pipes, know your clogs, and

a thousand battles will be won without a fight.”

Real-Life Application

Remember, every drain has a story. Each clog is a chapter in the saga of household plumbing. Your snake isn't just clearing a drain; it's solving a mystery. Like Sherlock Holmes with his magnifying glass, you, with your snake, are uncovering the truth one turn at a time.

Conclusion

So, my apprentice, embrace the snake. Let it be your guide through the dark, damp underbelly of homes. With it, you'll not only unclog drains but also learn patience, precision, and perhaps, a bit of plumbing philosophy. Remember, "The snake is your friend" – treat it well, and it will serve you loyally.

For more tales of the snake and its adventures, or for further enlightenment on the path of plumbing, stay tuned to our blog. Until next time, keep your snakes sharp and your drains flowing!

Suggested Plumbers Snake:

- [VEVOR Drain Cleaner Machine 100FT](#)
- [WORKPRO 20V Electric Drain Auger](#)

[Ultimate Plumbing Pro's Guide to Water Flows and Gravity](#)

written by Vicky Barry | September 4, 2024



Gravity It's the unsung hero of plumbing

Unlocking Plumbing Secrets: The Universal Rule of Righty Tighty

written by Jude Campbell | September 4, 2024



Ah, brave souls seeking the ancient wisdom of the pipes, gather 'round! For today, we unlock one of the most guarded secrets in the realm of plumbing: the mystical chant of "Righty Tighty, Lefty Loosey."