

Five questions to ask any security company before you sign

With what a good answer sounds like. Ask every company the same five, write the answers down, and compare them side by side. Use it on us or on anyone else.

1 Who will install the system? ☐

Ask whether the people who install are the company's own staff or a subcontractor. Ask who will be on site, and who you talk to if something looks wrong during the work.

A good answer: "Our own technicians install it. Here is who will be on site, and here is who you call during the job. We test everything before we leave, walk you through it, and write down what we installed and where."

2 What happens when something breaks? ☐

Ask who you call, whether they can fix it remotely, and who comes out when they can't. Ask what a service call costs outside the warranty.

A good answer: "You call this number. Most problems we can fix remotely. If we can't, the same team that installed it comes out. Here is what a visit costs once you are outside the warranty."

3 Where does the footage live, and for how long? ☐

Ask where the video is stored: on a recorder in your building, in the cloud, or both. Then ask how many days you can look back. Ask what happens to the footage if the recorder is stolen, or if your internet goes down. Ask how you would export a clip for police or your insurer.

A good answer: "On a recorder in a locked spot, kept about this many weeks. Here is what happens if it is stolen, and here is how you would hand a clip to police." A clear number of days beats "plenty."

4 What is in the quote, line by line? ☐

Ask for the quote broken out: each camera or sensor and where it goes, the recorder or panel, cabling, labour, setup, and any monthly fees.

A good answer: "Here is every item, where it goes, and why. This part is one time. This part is monthly. Here is what is not included." If you ask why a camera is placed somewhere, you get a reason, not a shrug.

5 What am I locked into? ☐

Ask how long the contract runs and what it costs to leave early. Ask whether you own the equipment once it is paid for. Ask the hardest one plainly: if you cancel monitoring or the service plan, does the system still work?

A good answer: "The term is this long. Leaving early costs this. You own the equipment. If you cancel the plan, here is exactly what keeps working and what stops." You should get it in writing before you sign.