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Quick QA Checklist for High-Risk Bid Areas

13 fast checks that catch the mistakes which quietly sink a bid — run through this right before you hit submit.

Most bad bids don't fail because the estimator didn't know what they were doing. They fail because one small thing got missed on a busy day — an old drawing, a rounded-off quantity, a missing bond form. This checklist is a short, plain-language pass you run at the very end, so those small things get caught before the client sees them.

How to Use This Checklist

1. **Do it last, not first**
   Run this after your estimate is otherwise finished and priced — this is a final gate before the bid goes out, not a substitute for your normal takeoff process.

2. **Go in order, one at a time**
   The 13 checks are ordered the way risk usually shows up on a bid: scope and drawings first, pricing details in the middle, and paperwork and submission last. Don't skip around.

3. **Give it real time, not a glance**
   Budget 20–30 minutes for a typical bid. Rushing this checklist defeats the point — the mistakes it catches are the ones that are easy to miss when you're tired or moving fast.

4. **Get a second set of eyes**
   Where you can, have a teammate run the same 13 checks independently. Two people scanning the same bid almost always catch different things.

5. **Fix it, don't just flag it**
   If a check turns up a problem, stop and fix it in the estimate before moving to the next check. Don't leave a list of issues for "after submission" — by then it's too late.

6. **Keep a copy with the bid file**
   Once every check is clear, save a copy of the completed checklist with that bid's records. It's a fast way to show a client — or your own boss — exactly how the number was quality-checked.

> **Rule of thumb:** if you don't have time to run all 13 checks, at minimum run #1 Scope, #3 Addenda, and #11 Bid Form & Bonds. Those three cause the most bids to lose or get disqualified for reasons that have nothing to do with price.

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The 13 Checks

Work down this list in order, right before you submit. Each row tells you exactly what to open and what to look for.

#	CHECK	WHAT TO LOOK AT
1	**Scope**	Go through the drawings and specs one more time. Make sure every big item you see there is also sitting in the estimate. If something is on the drawing but missing from the estimate, that's a problem — catch it now.
2	**Drawings**	Check that you used the newest set of drawings, not an old one. Look at the date or revision number on top — it should match the latest version the client sent.
3	**Addenda**	Addenda are the extra notes or changes sent after the first drawings. Make sure you got all of them, read them, and actually added their cost into the bid. Don't skip even one.
4	**Quantities**	Pick the 2 or 3 biggest, most expensive items in the estimate. Quickly re-check their numbers by hand against the drawing. If a number looks rounded off or guessed, double check it.
5	**Labor**	Look at how fast you assumed the crew will work. Compare it to a similar job you finished before. If this job assumes the crew will move much faster than last time, that's risky.
6	**Material**	Check the date on every material price you used. If a price is more than 7 days old, or the supplier's quote has expired, get a fresh one before you trust it.
7	**Waste**	Make sure you didn't use one waste number for everything. Sheet material, solid wood, and countertops all waste differently — check that each one has its own, correct percentage.
8	**Subcontractor Quotes**	Make sure every sub you're comparing is quoting the exact same scope of work — not one doing more and one doing less. Try to have at least 3 quotes for every major trade so you know the price is fair.
9	**Exclusions**	Read your exclusions list like a client would. It should clearly say what you are NOT including. If something risky (like permits or bonds) isn't mentioned anywhere, add it.
10	**Markup**	Check that your overhead and profit percentage is the normal company number, not something changed by mistake or left over from a different job.

#	CHECK	WHAT TO LOOK AT
11	**Bid Form & Bonds**	Check the bid form is filled out exactly the way the client asked. Make sure any required bond or insurance paper is attached. A bid can get thrown out just for missing this, even if the price is good.
12	**Alternates**	If the client asked for optional add-ons or alternates, make sure they're priced as their own separate line — not mixed into your main price.
13	**Submission Details**	Double check the deadline, and how the client wants the bid sent — email, portal, or in person. Getting this wrong can mean your bid isn't even accepted, no matter how good it is.

Before You Hit Submit

If all 13 boxes are clear, you're in good shape. This checklist is a fast, final gate — it catches the everyday slips that cost real money, but it doesn't replace your normal estimating process or your own judgment on a job. Adapt the checks to fit how your company actually bids.

> **Keep this handy:** print it, pin it above your desk, or keep it open on a second monitor while you do your final read-through. The goal is to make this a normal last step on every bid — not a one-time exercise.