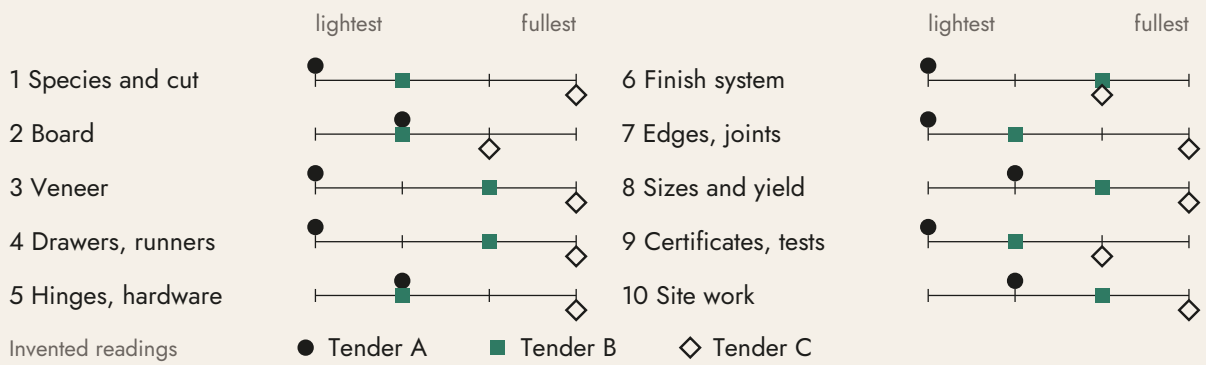
Why bespoke quotes *differ*, and how to compare them

Ten specification lines that let tenders differ, and how to compare quotes like for like. Cost drivers only, no prices.

AT A GLANCE

Line	What it changes in the work	Ask each tenderer	Closed by
1 Species and cut	Which timber is bought, and how much of each board is usable.	Which species and cut, and what knot and sapwood limits did you price?	Clauses 2, 3, 4
2 Board	Board family, grade and thickness change material, machining and finish.	Which board, to what standard and grade, what thickness, balanced?	Clause 7
3 Veneer	Leaf thickness, grade, match and sequence set the veneer used and the waste.	Which species, cut, match, thickness and backer?	Clause 8
4 Drawers and runners	Box material, joint and runner class set the parts and the labour.	Box material and joint, runner type and load rating?	Clauses 9, 10
5 Hinges and hardware	Type, number per door, finish and rating.	Which reference, how many per door, which finish?	Clause 10
6 Finish system	Coats, drying time, sheen, colour match and which faces are finished.	System, number of coats, sheen, insides finished?	Clause 11
7 Edges and joints	Edge treatment and joint type set the machining and hand work.	Which edge, which carcase joint, which back panel?	Clause 9
8 Sizes and yield	Sizes that sit awkwardly on standard boards leave offcuts.	Finished or nominal sizes? Which board size assumed?	Clause 5
9 Certificates and tests	Certification, test reports and declarations take time to gather.	Which documents are included in the price?	Clause 12
10 Site work	Survey, access, lifting, fitting and protection.	What delivery and fitting is included, on what access assumptions?	Clauses 1, 6

Clause numbers refer to the twelve-clause checklist in the joinery specification factsheet (TL-JOI-03). No prices or percentages are given: what moves a price depends on the piece, the workshop and the date.



Ten loose lines, three tenderers. The readings are invented to show the effect; they are not data from real tenders. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio.

COMPARE LIKE WITH LIKE IN FIVE STEPS

1. Put the quotes beside the ten lines. For each line, write down what each tenderer says it has priced, in its own words.
2. Mark the blanks. A line a tender does not answer is an assumption, not a match.
3. Issue the closed wording to every tenderer at the same time as a clarification, and ask each to confirm or reprice against it.
4. Price the gaps as options. Ask for the difference between a lighter and a fuller reading of a line as a separate figure, so nothing is re-quoted from scratch.
5. Compare totals last. Only after steps 1 to 4 are the totals made of the same things.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

TENDER RETURN: LINE BY LINE

Tenderers are to state, for each of lines [1 to 10] of the specification, the product, grade, thickness, construction and finish priced. A line left blank is taken as priced exactly to the specification. Every qualification, exclusion and assumption is listed separately and not in the covering letter.

INCLUSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

The tender is to state whether it includes: shop drawings and [number] rounds of review; samples [S-01 to S-05]; site survey; packing and protection; delivery to [address, floor, access]; installation and making good; certificates and test reports [list]; handover documents; warranty [period and terms offered]. Price validity [ ] days. Programme assumes drawing approval by [date].

CLARIFICATION ISSUED TO ALL TENDERERS

Clarification [number], issued to all tenderers on [date]: lines [numbers] are closed as follows: [wording]. Tenderers are to confirm that their price is made on this wording, or to state the change in price, by [date].

OPTIONS FOR A FULLER READING

Where a tender has priced a lighter reading of line [number] than the specification requires, the difference to the specified reading is to be priced as a separate option. Alternatives are accepted only by written approval from [designer], and each is recorded as a variation.

TERMS USED

Prescriptive specification

States exactly what products, materials and workmanship are required. Design responsibility stays with the design team.

Descriptive specification

States the result required and leaves a specialist or contractor to design how. Design responsibility generally passes with it.

Value engineering

A structured review of a design to reduce cost without losing the function the client needs. Each change should be recorded and approved.

Variation order

A written instruction to change what was agreed, stating its effect on price and time.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- NBS: RIBA Plan of Work 2020 and specification: prescriptive and descriptive specification; shop drawings (page read 5 Nov 2026).
- Make Bespoke Studio journal: How to specify bespoke joinery: briefing a joinery package.
- Make Bespoke Studio journal: Value engineering in interior design: changing a design to meet a budget.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/why-bespoke-quotes-differ. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.