A few definitions may make it easier for you to communicate with roofers.

**Built-up Roof**—A low-slope (or flat-seeming) roof covered with alternating layers of roofing felt and hot-mopped asphalt and topped off with a layer of gravel.

**Cornice**—The wood or metal finishing at ends or edges of a building, including a fascia, frieze, or rake.

**Counterflashing**—The flashing that is embedded, or attached, and sealed at its top in a wall or other vertical structure and is lapped down over base flashing.

**Courses**—Horizontal rows of shingles or tiles.

**Drip Edge**—The strip of metal extending out beyond the eaves or rakes to prevent rainwater from curling around the shingles back onto the wooden portion of the house.

**Eaves**—The lower edge of a roof (often overhanging beyond the edge of the house).

**Fascia**—A decorative board extending down from the roof edge either at the eave or at the rake.

**Felt**—The bituminous paper used by roofers, usually made of a combination of asphalt and either paper or rags.

**Flashing**—Sheet metal or other material used at junctions of different planes or materials on a roof to prevent leakage.

**Frieze Board**—A board at the top of the house’s finished wall, forming a corner with the soffit.

**Joist**—In a flat roof, a horizontal structural member over which sheathing is attached.

**Pitch (slope)**—The number of inches of vertical rise in a roof per 12 inches of horizontal distance.

**Rafter**—A structural member (usually slanted) to which sheathing is attached.

**Rake**—The slanting edge of a gable roof at the end wall of the house.

**Ridge**—The horizontal line at the top edge of two sloping roof planes.

**Sheathing**—The decking material (usually sheets of plywood), which is nailed to the rafters, and to which shingles or other outside roofing materials are secured.

**Single-ply**—A roofing system or roofing material used for low-slope roofs, including systems made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), EPDM rubber, and Thermoplastic polyolefin (TPO).

**Soffit**—The area that encloses the underside of that portion of the roof that extends out beyond the sidewalls of the house.

**Square**—One hundred square feet of roof.

**Step Flashing**—Flashing that is laid in strips under each shingle and bent up the edge of a chimney or wall.

**Synthetic shingles**—Shingles made of metal, wood fiber, Portland cement with fibers, and polymer composites to look like slate or wood shingles.

**Underlayment**—The material (usually roofing felt) laid on top of sheathing before shingles are applied.

**Valley**—Where two sloping roof sections meet.

**Valley Flashing**—The metal or fabric in valleys, extending in under the shingles on both sides.