



Tips for a Well-Built Basement

Considering remodeling your basement for extra living space? These tips will help you plan your project, build a warm & dry basement, and create an inviting and healthy place to live.

1. Planning:

- Minimum headroom is 7-6". Digging the floor down is sometimes more expensive than raising the house, especially if the foundation is bad. Consult an engineer.
- For more headroom, utility runs could be consolidated and run around in a perimeter soffit. Replace old 'octopus' furnaces with high efficiency, gas furnaces.
- Look for signs of water damage: bulged & cracked concrete, efflorescence, or mold. Find the causes & correct before continuing.
- Old 'rat slab' floors are frequently unstable, have high moisture content & can only be covered in 'breathable' flooring. Consider replacing or poring over.
- If sewer main is above floor level, a pump is required for basement bath waste
- For fire escape, bedrooms must have 'egress' windows, that exit to sizable window well
- Green Tip – Test for radon, asbestos & lead paint.

2. Warm & dry

- To dry foundation walls, grade soil away from house, snake out exterior footing drain and downspout lines, or add an interior footing drain.
- Damp foundation walls should be covered in drain mat, connected to an interior footing drain, and sump pumped out.
- If there is headroom, rat slabs can be covered in drain mat, 1" XPS foam, and pored over with gypcrete or sheathed in plywood. This is an opportunity to add in floor heat.
- Green Tip - Up to 30% of a home's heat loss occurs through basement walls. To insulate against this, fasten 2" of XPS foam to wall and tape the seams.

3. Inviting

- Daylight basements with glass doors to a garden patio are very welcoming
- Add as many windows and ceiling can lights as possible.
- Fireplaces are a great way to add warmth & light
- To tie house together, consider using an inviting staircase from the upper floor, and keep the basement finishes consistent with the rest of the house.
- Green Tip – In case of flood, some 'floating floors' are easy to remove, dry out & reuse.

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