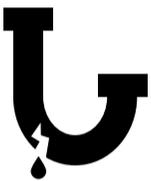


WHAT TO DO BEFORE FINISHING YOUR BASEMENT



ASSESS THE FOUNDATION

Inspect your foundation before any work begins. Cracks, leaks or patches of soft concrete are all indicators that you may need foundation repairs before proceeding with your project. Otherwise, all you're doing is covering a problem that can lead to serious structural damage to your home.



TAKE CARE OF WATER ISSUES

Water is a basement's worst enemy. It's crucial to check for any signs of water damage that might have been caused by leaky pipes. Not only will fixing those pipes help prevent further damage to your foundation, but it can prevent mold from taking hold in your basement.



LOOK FOR CODE VIOLATIONS

Renovating your basement makes it a good time to ensure that your property is up to code. For example, egress windows in basements have been required only since the 1990s, so many homes built before then don't have them. Including egress windows in your remodeling plans can save you the hassle of a fire code violation in the future.



THINK ABOUT YOUR CEILING

Basement ceilings in many homes built 20 or more years ago might not be high enough for your comfort. Those homes were built before modern fire codes were established. If you're thinking about raising your basement's ceiling as part of your finishing project, consult with your contractor to learn whether it's feasible. Also consider a drop ceiling to allow for access to plumbing and electrical lines that may run along your basement's ceiling.



DON'T SKIMP ON INSULATION

Just because many basements are cold and drafty doesn't mean they're supposed to be that way. Ensure that your finished basement is properly insulated. This is important for comfort as well as energy efficiency. When your home has more insulation — especially in traditionally drafty places such as a basement — it wastes less energy and you spend less on energy bills.



THINK ABOUT YOUR PLANS

After dealing with the essentials, it's time to determine how your finished basement will come together. You may have specific ideas about how you want to use your finished basement. However, it's a good idea to allow for some flexibility, in case situations change in the future. For example, you may want to include a full bathroom in case in-laws or other relatives move in with you in the future.

