

Keep these pro tips in mind when renovating a basement

You spend more time indoors during the winter months, so it's inevitable that you might start to feel a little cramped, especially if you live in a smaller home. If that's the case, you may consider finishing your basement to increase your square footage. It can definitely add value and increase comfort, but there are a few things you'll want to do to ensure it's a surefire success:

Address moisture. I've seen a lot of poorly executed basement renos, where the contractor comes in, throws up some studs, tosses in some fiberglass batts and vapour barrier, then slaps on some drywall. Often, problems arise down the road. Inspecting the interior foundation and floors for moisture issues, water damage or mould problems and addressing areas of concern are vital to prevent the development of mold and mildew. Ensure that your job specifies moisture-resistant building materials for performance and durability of the living space.

Insulate wisely. First and foremost, you'll

want to select a moisture-resistant and vapour permeable insulation that can dry if exposed to moisture and retain its full R-value over time. I prefer stone wool insulation over fiberglass just for that reason. Canadian manufacturer Roxul makes a few products that are ideal for the job. I recommend installing Roxul Comfortboard 80 against the interior walls, before installing the studs. This continuous layer of insulation will prevent thermal bridging, reducing your energy consumption and heating costs. Build your studs against the Comfortboard 80, preferably with treated lumber, and fill the studs with R14 Comfortbatt to achieve a basement wall with an effective R20 R-value. Finally, finish with a smart membrane vapour control layer, tuck tape and moisture-resistant drywall. Don't forget to insulate basement header for maximum energy efficiency.

Scott McGillivray is host of the hit TV series Income Property on HGTV Canada.

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