

Basement Finishing Checklist

Every step in the right order, from the first moisture test to the final inspection

Work through the phases in order. Check items off as you go, and don't pass an **inspection checkpoint** (amber) until the inspector signs off. Doing basement work out of order is how people end up tearing out insulation to run a wire or opening finished walls for an inspector.

1 Test and prepare the space

- ☐ Run the plastic sheet test on the floor and a wall for 1-2 weeks
- ☐ Track humidity with a hygrometer; keep it below 50-60%
- ☐ Fix gutters, downspouts and grading; repair leaking cracks
- ☐ Run a radon test (mitigate at 4 pCi/L or higher)
- ☐ Check walls for horizontal cracks, bowing or growing cracks
- ☐ Note age and capacity of furnace, water heater and electrical panel

Don't move on until the basement stays dry through heavy rain.

2 Plan, budget and permit

- ☐ Measure and draw the basement to scale with every fixed point marked
- ☐ Place rooms around mechanicals, posts, stairs and the main drain
- ☐ Confirm ceiling heights, egress for bedrooms and equipment clearances
- ☐ Decide the bathroom drain route (Bathroom Planner)
- ☐ Build the materials list and budget (Materials Estimator)
- ☐ Set a 10-15% contingency and line up financing
- ☐ Apply for permits; note the inspection schedule

3 Hire your trades

- ☐ Send the same scope sheet to every bidder (GC Kit)
- ☐ Get at least 3 written, line-itemed bids per trade
- ☐ Verify licenses and insurance; call 2 references each
- ☐ Sign written agreements with scope, price, schedule and payment terms
- ☐ Schedule trades in order on the GC Kit timeline

4 Demo, prep and insulate the foundation

- ☐ Clear out, demo old finishes and clean the walls and floor
- ☐ Snap chalk lines for every wall on the slab
- ☐ Glue rigid foam to foundation walls; tape every seam
- ☐ Insulate and seal the rim joists

5 Frame

- ☐ Pressure-treated bottom plates with sill gasket, fastened to the slab
- ☐ Walls held about 1/2 in. off the foam
- ☐ Partition walls, soffits and door openings framed
- ☐ Fire blocking at wall tops and soffits
- ☐ Blocking for TVs, shelves, grab bars, towel bars and cabinets
- ☐ Egress window cut and installed

6 Rough-ins

- ☐ Mark every outlet, switch, light and register on the studs
- ☐ Plumbing rough-in: drains, vents and supply
- ☐ HVAC rough-in: supply ducts, returns, bath fan ducted outside
- ☐ Electrical rough-in: boxes, wiring, panel work, alarm locations
- ☐ Low-voltage wiring for TV, network and speakers
- ☐ Nail plates where pipes or wires pass near stud faces

7 Rough-in inspection **INSPECTION CHECKPOINT**

- ☐ Framing, plumbing, mechanical and electrical inspected
- ☐ Corrections made and signed off
- ☐ Photos of every open wall and ceiling bay, tape measure in frame

Nothing gets covered until this passes.

8 Insulate and soundproof

- ☐ Stud bays insulated where planned
- ☐ Sound batts in the ceiling and around bedrooms or theater
- ☐ Insulation inspection, if your town requires one

9 Drywall

- ☐ Ceiling hung first, then walls; moisture-resistant board below grade
- ☐ Drywall held about 1/2 in. off the floor
- ☐ Access panels at valves, cleanouts and junction boxes
- ☐ Three coats of mud, sanded and ready for primer

10 Paint, ceiling and flooring

- ☐ Prime all new drywall; paint ceilings, then walls
- ☐ Install drop ceiling grid (tiles near the end)
- ☐ Check slab moisture and flatness; acclimate flooring 48 hours
- ☐ Install flooring with the required expansion gap
- ☐ Tile the bathroom floor and shower

11 Trim and finish trades

- ☐ Hang doors; install casing and baseboard
- ☐ Electrician sets devices, fixtures and smoke/CO alarms
- ☐ Plumber sets toilet, vanity and shower fixtures
- ☐ HVAC installs registers and balances airflow
- ☐ Caulk, fill nail holes and touch up paint

12 Final inspection and close-out INSPECTION CHECKPOINT

- ☐ Final inspection passed; permit closed in writing
- ☐ Lien waivers collected for every payment
- ☐ Warranties, manuals and inspection records filed
- ☐ Punch list complete; final payments released

Keep the paperwork. A closed permit counts at resale.

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