

ready? set? begin!



turn a basement into a “spacement”



The use of 3-D CAD software allows a virtual walk-through to view design details and layout prior to construction.

Does your formal living room look more like a TOYS-R-US® showroom? Do you walk the house when watching Monday Night Football because the acoustics in your family room are more like an amphitheater or stadium? Wouldn't it be great not to hear the children battling over which video games to play or which

TV shows to watch? Then, there's no getting around it, it's time to reclaim the first floor of your home and finish your basement. Where do you begin?

HOUSE & HOME contacted Brad Boucher, owner of Spacemts, Inc., to offer practical advice for homeowners who are about to finish their basements. Boucher has been designing and building basements for over 17 years.

Following is Boucher's firsthand professional advice.

PLANNING IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Today, finished basements have become an essential need for most families. Homeowners should think of this project as adding an entire new floor to their home.

Upon initial consultation, I develop a profile, establish a family's wants and needs and help prioritize goals. I ask homeowners to fill out a

basic questionnaire that polls the number, age and gender of kids, family dynamics, short- and long-term priorities, etc. After gathering the background information, I focus on the space needed and the family's plans for it, including a 'wants' list and then narrow it down to a specific 'needs' list. I also ask the homeowners how long they plan to live in their home.

Having a finished basement adds tremendous resale value to a home, but you don't want to build it for someone else, so consider your goals and plan accordingly. Case in point: a poorly designed basement can be a liability versus an asset when it comes time for resale. Homeowners actually ask us to come in and tear down a basement that just doesn't work for them.

The next step is compiling the information collected and taking measurements to accommodate as



In this Spacemts, Inc., design, keeping the play area near the action allows kids to feel connected to the family.

many requests as budget allows. A floor plan is designed, either sketched by hand or by using state-of-the-art CAD programs. Computer-aided design is a powerful tool that is helpful to owners in understanding the spatial planning that is underway. By viewing a 3-D virtual walk-through of a particular layout, people can actually experience in great detail how the end result will look and feel. This type of insight illustrates the proportion and scale of furniture, walls, pool table, etc., and how it will look when standing in the middle of the finished basement.

PRE-CONSTRUCTION CHECKLIST

Make sure that the space is “finish ready.” This means all water, mold, leaks and cracks are sealed and repaired properly prior to construction. Often, a very common water problem is caused by downspouts draining too close to the home. This can be easily fixed by simply adding downspout extensions to drain water

away from the house.

More practical advice: make a videotape documenting your utilities and areas that will be covered or walled off. Note the placement and positioning of any shut-off valves or electrical junction boxes, etc. This can be an invaluable reference when trying to locate these items in the future.

Spacemts offers some unique services that include removing or relocating support columns, rerouting duct work, moving water heaters and relocating pre-plumbed bathrooms that were poorly placed, as well as adding new egress windows or doors. Tackling these jobs with a little repositioning can make a vital difference in opening up the space.

SPACEMENTS' GOLDEN RULES OF DESIGN

- Keep an open floor plan. This offers flexibility and creates a space that flows versus one that may be broken up or choppy.
- Comfortable fit. An overambitious >>>



Areas can be defined with half walls, false beams, flooring and shades from the same color palette.



Open floor plans create an inviting space for the whole family to enjoy.

material choices: focus on ceilings

The crucial elements of a new basement are the ceiling, walls, flooring, plumbing and electricity.

This month Rich Wiley, associate manager, residential ceilings, Armstrong Ceilings, gives pointers on selecting ceiling products.

Decorative and traditional suspended ceiling products that emphasize natural styles, while allowing for necessary access to the home's HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems that often run in-between basement ceiling joists, are the best choices.

One such option is Armstrong's HomeStyle® line of mineral fiberboard drop-in ceiling panels. "These are perfect for basements as they offer the ability to block noise from room-to-room and floor-to-floor," says Wiley. "They also come in a variety of designs and are much more distinct and stylish than the bland, office-setting ceiling panels that often come to mind with a basement."



HomeStyle Raised Panel pattern from Armstrong Ceilings is a classic choice for any basement.

wish list can crowd your floor space and take away from how well your overall floor plan works.

- Prioritize goals and needs. If the Number One goal is to create a successful family room/TV area, don't compromise it by building a home gym to accommodate old exercise equipment that may never get used.
- Think like a kid. A small child can't verbalize or explain what he or she needs for play space. Careful consideration is key to creating an awesome play area that your children will love to use. Themed murals, artwork, colorful walls and rugs, novelty lighting and small-scale seating are great investments that inspire playful children and make them feel special. Toddlers need to feel connected with the family. Locating the playroom in a remote area or in a separate room with doors is a setup for toy storage and not a place where young children will want to be.

Keep "whole floor mentality" in mind, and understand that now is the time to make changes, not after the basement has been built. It's easier to add a wall than take one away.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CONTRACTOR

Beware of jack-of-all-trades and general contractors. Ask the contractor what his or her last three or four jobs were. If they were all basements, that's a good sign. If one was a basement, you might want to find a company with more experience.

Check current references. A basement specialist should have ten to twenty available projects that you

can visit. Ask to see a finished project firsthand. Don't rely on photos of completed projects; experiencing a walk-through is sensory. How inviting does the basement feel? Where do your eyes go? How does the space flow? Does it feel open and welcoming or confined and closed-in? Establishing distinct areas without using walls can be achieved by using color palettes, flooring options, architectural details, ceiling design, specialty lighting, etc., and is one of Spacements' design trademarks.

Through the years, Spacements, Inc., has learned to change flaws into features. This works like a charm in turning unused dingy basements into much-needed functional living space.

Brad Boucher, owner of Spacements, Inc., Kimberton, PA, has been featured on national television and in publications. Boucher is regarded as an industry leader in basement design and finishing.

Spacements, Inc., offers a complete design and build service, as well as project management, consultation, home theatre systems and custom bars. For more information, visit the company's website at www.spacements.com or call 610-907-5030.

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