

Basement ideas – the ultimate guide to remodelling and finishing your basement space

Dig down to maximize your home's living space - from design considerations to materials and costs, we lay out the basics

Transforming an unfinished basement into a habitable zone is a smart way to establish extra square footage in your home – especially if you've exhausted the opportunities to extend above ground.

From spacious living areas, playrooms and home offices, to specialist rooms including home gyms, movie theatres and wine storage, the opportunities for expansion are endless.

However, remodelling your basement comes with a host of additional considerations that don't necessarily apply to construction work above grade level.

Ventilation, waterproofing and ensuring a plentiful supply of natural light are a few of the typical challenges you're likely to face during your project.

Your first step is to decide exactly what functions the new subterranean level should perform.

You can prioritize this list of features by dividing it into 'must have' and 'nice to have' categories. Taking this approach will also help you keep a firm grip on budget as the project progresses.

'It's important to be honest with yourself at this stage,' says Liz Caan, founder and principal at [Liz Caan & Co.](#), a Massachusetts-based design firm. 'If your basement has a separate entrance, consider the uses and the flexibility this can provide. Maybe a guest suite would be nice, an au pair area, a home office, or a media gaming room? It's also a good idea to maximize storage in the basement so it feels pulled together and not overly cluttered.'

Once you've established your priorities for the remodel, it's time to track down an architect or designer who understands your vision for the space. Ask around friends, neighbors or colleagues who have recently had any work done to see if they can provide recommendations.

Regardless of the intended use of your revamped basement, it's important to create a space that integrates seamlessly with the rest of the house – you don't want the lower level to feel cut off.

'When remodelling an existing basement, I try to make it feel as important as the rest of the home,' says Liz Caan. 'I prefer nice finishes like plaster ceilings and walls, a wood or stone floor, matching interior doors and a trim molding. I usually use recessed lights as ceiling height can be an issue.'

WHAT IS THE BEST FLOORING TO INSTALL IN A BASEMENT?

Flooring has the potential to take up a significant portion of your budget for fixtures and finishes, so it's important to specify a practical solution that looks great and will stand the test of time.

'I'm a big fan of porcelain tiles, where I can layer rugs over the top of the surface,' says Liz Caan. 'You can have tile that looks like natural wood or metal. Even Belgian bluestone is beautiful. Plus, if you do happen to get water ingress in the basement, the floors will be unharmed.'

If you already have a concrete floor in your basement, an economical way to finish it would be to add a coat of paint. Layering rugs on top of the painted surface would help you to achieve a more unique aesthetic.