

# Don't neglect basement

The basement floor should be laid down as soon as practical. It is then possible to install the furnace, on its permanent base, and space is provided for storage of the weather. The removal of dirt and grit tracked through the house will also be reduced.

The basement deserves a much attention as other parts of the house. Even if there are no special plans for its immediate use, the floor should be properly laid, with the correct slope, and a smooth, hard finish. A smooth floor will be easier to keep clean and there will be no pockets to collect water whenever the floor is washed. This aspect becomes even more important if there is to be a basement workshop or laundry area, or if plans call for a basement recreation room.

**LAYER OF FILL**  
There are a number of things to be done before pouring the concrete for the basement floor. Unless the base is sand, gravel or stone, a five-inch layer of "fill" has to be put down. Crushed stone or coarse gravel are frequently used for this purpose, but cinders will do, provided they do not come in direct contact with cast iron pipes.

If the bottom of the excavation does not dry out rapidly enough and there are signs that water is seeping in, it may be advisable to install a second row of drain tiles. The tiles should be placed along the inside of the footing, and should be connected to the drain where it leaves the building. To prevent waste matter backing up, the tiles should be at a higher level than the drain pipe itself.

The basement floor should slope towards the drain. An incline of about one inch in every ten feet is sufficient. The slope can be checked with a spirit level set on the edge of a straight board eight or ten feet in length.

Fill should be made compact before the concrete is poured. Watering it down a number of times with a garden hose will help. Even on sandy soil where no fill is needed, it is a good idea to wet the ground thoroughly before pouring the concrete. Otherwise the dry sand may draw too much water out of the concrete and lower the quality of the finished product.

As a measure of precaution, the floor drain should be covered before the concrete is poured.

**PROTECT FRAME**  
In all probability the concrete will be poured into the

basement through one of the basement windows. To protect the window frame against damage a board should be fixed over the sill, using finishing nails to hold it down. Afterwards the board can be easily removed and the nail holes filled with putty before painting.

Concrete for basement floors should be of good quality, preferably 3,000-pound concrete. It is easier to obtain a smooth finish if no large stones are used. Half-inch stone is ideal if the polishing or "floating" is done entirely with a hand trowel. If the floor is to be machine-polished, the presence of slightly larger stones will still make an excellent, final, possible.

Three inches is the minimum depth for the concrete floor in an NHL-finished house, but four inches will give a better quality floor.

The concrete is first levelled with a spade or hoe. Later, it is smoothed with the edge of a board. When it has just begun to set and is strong enough to carry the weight of a man, the "floating" or polishing begins. This is a time-consuming process and the manner in which it is carried out has a great deal to do with the quality of the concrete, particularly the surface. Too much floating, or

floating the concrete too soon, tends to draw an excessive amount of water to the surface. Some of the finer aggregates and cement particles will then float to the top, producing a weak, soft-textured finish that will just assist. These fine particles of cement dust present an additional cleaning problem for the house-keeper.

**TOO MUCH TIME**  
It is equally bad to allow too much time to elapse between pouring and floating. As the concrete hardens it becomes more difficult to smooth and the result is a rough and bumpy floor. Deficiencies of the sort are not easily corrected.

If the floor is being poured in winter, care should be taken not to overheat the basement in an attempt to speed up drying of the concrete. This may cause excessive shrinkage and lead to cracks; it may also produce a poor surface texture. Curing should be a gradual process. It is good practice to sprinkle the floor often while it is drying out. Within a day or two of pouring the concrete should be hard enough to walk on. But the floor can still be damaged easily at this stage. Heavy materials or sharp objects should not be dragged across the floor until it has hardened further.

# Fall is ideal to carry out home projects

Fall weather conditions are a ideal for carrying out many home improvements with concrete products.

First step, says the National Concrete Products Association, might be to build a patio. Detailed construction information is available at no cost from the association.

A fireplace or barbecue will add enjoyment to terrace or patio living and the association can also provide plans for its construction.

The association has members in each province, and many of them offer plans of their own, and advice on patterns and colours, and on construction.

Retaining walls, and decorative enclosures for gardens, patios and swimming pools can be easily laid up using concrete brick, block and decorative patterns.

If a project involving block laying is a bit too formidable for an initial attempt, many precast producers can provide forms that need merely to be set in place to beautifully the home.

The kitchen probably gets more attention from architects and designers than any other part of the house. One of their main concerns is providing as much cupboard space as possible without interfering with other kitchen uses. The bare minimum prescribed for NHL finished houses is 24 feet of shelving and eight feet of counter space. Still this is far from ideal. The housewife, it seems, can never have too much storage and work space in her kitchen.

General specifications for kitchen cupboards are: counter top 36 inches off the floor; base of counter to be recessed about four inches to allow room for the feet; top shelf to be not more than 6 1/2 feet above the floor level. Variations of an inch or two may prove helpful to the standard design. It may be too high in some cases. But the counter top should never be less than 32 inches above the finished floor level. Manufacturers of stoves, washing machines, dryers, and kitchen units have adopted the 36 inch height as

# Lack of cupboard space seen as problem for homeowners

There is a variety of materials for covering counter tops. The ideal material would be one that does not scratch, is not marked by a hot pan, and one from which stains can be easily removed. To reduce clutter and cut down on broken dishes the covering material should be resilient. Probably no product on the market is ideal in all respects but many meet two or more of these requirements.

The moulding along the rim of the counter should preferably fit flush with the counter top. The type of moulding may cost a few cents per foot but it also makes it easier to keep the counter clean and there is less tendency for water, dirt and greases to collect along the edge. There are many ways of arranging for kitchen storage. But whatever the style, the sound basic rules apply - plenty of shelving for kitchen storage, and drawers, ease of access, sturdy construction and simplicity of design.

Drawers should be built to slide easily. Formerly, wooden drawers were held together with glued mortise and tenon joints. Today, few carpenters or cabinet makers go to this trouble. There is nothing wrong with a nail joint but if the parts are also glued some of the warping which tends to pull out the nails can be prevented.

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