

COMPARING  
**Apples**  
to **apples**



- ✓ *Learn what to ask contractors*
- ✓ *Know how to compare bids*
- ✓ *Includes ready-to-use bid sheets*

COMPARING  
**Apples**  
to **apples**

Dear Homeowner,

Finishing a basement can be an expensive and even emotional time, but also one of the most exciting and rewarding times for your whole family.

Over many years helping homeowners realize their dreams, I have heard hundreds complain about the bidding process. Rightfully so! Each contractor submits his or her bid differently than the next. This makes it difficult to figure out what is included, or not included, and in general what value you are getting for your investment. It can be a guessing game, a game that you can't afford to lose.

Many homeowners don't have the experience or in-depth knowledge necessary to know all the questions to ask. "Apples to Apples" will guide you through the decision making process and help you minimize any guesswork in selecting contractors, planning your project and estimating your final project cost.

This book is designed to give you a basic education in processes, materials and even code issues you should know about, giving you all the needed tools to make informed decisions throughout the entire basement finishing process.

Let's get started on your project!

Sincerely,



Jeff A. Edverson  
Editor in Chief - Homefront Publishing

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## Instructions

*Using the "Comparing Apples to Apples" guide*

The following information will help you ensure a finished basement that you and your family will enjoy for years to come. Any contractor who cares about pleasing his customers should be happy to answer all the questions. Some contractors may be hesitant to fill out this bid sheet. If so, find contractors who will. A reputable contractor will be eager to provide this information for you.

1. Make packet of pages 14-31 for each contractor submitting a bid.
2. Fill out your personal contact information in the front of the packet.
3. Submit a packet to each general contractor. Find out when they will return it to you. Set a deadline if necessary.
4. Compare contractor bids. Ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

### General Guidelines

The bids you receive should be firm, fixed quotes for finishing your basement. Make sure you understand the total project cost. Nobody likes surprises. If you have questions, ask the contractors to answer them, never assume anything.

Check out the contractor and his work. Call his references, look at his work, visit some of his subcontractors, and check his license and insurance. Make sure you have in writing when the project will start and be finished.

Communication is very important between both parties. If he does not return phone calls or e-mail within a day, excluding holidays and weekends, find another contractor.

## How to Make Your Basement Project Run Smoothly

*Things to do before construction starts*

### Have a Solid Plan

Before you start any home remodeling project, it is vitally important to have a plan. This includes designing a floor plan layout of the proposed finished basement. Take the time to think about your family's lifestyle and needs when putting the design together. Be creative. Look at magazines, TV shows, and Internet sites to get great design ideas. Some software programs will help you design your space and draw out your ideas.

### Deal with Moisture Issues

Moisture issues **MUST** be addressed before starting any remodeling project. Do not start any work until this problem is solved. This may require sealing the floors and foundation walls or installing a drain tile system. If this issue is not addressed, you will have water, moisture, and / or mold issues. Your finished basement must stay dry. If you already have an existing drain tile system, put in a new pump and install a back-up system. Moisture problems may also require outside landscaping or gutter installation to remedy the situation.

### Scheduling

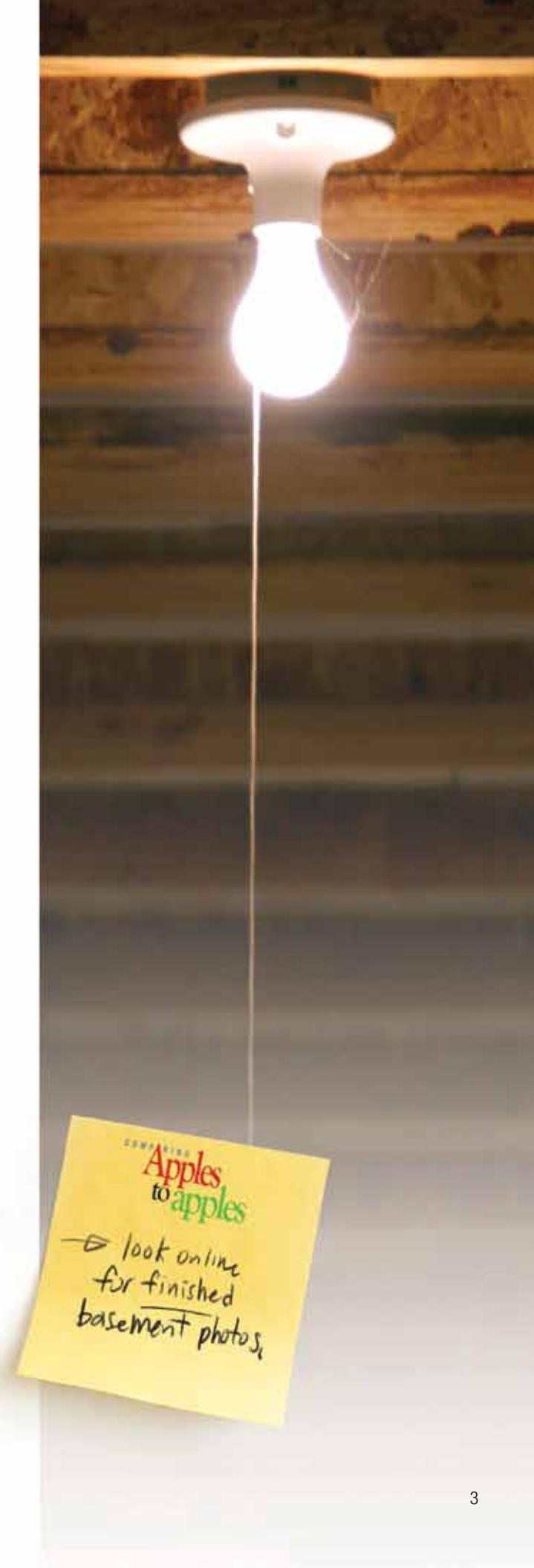
When you think you have selected your contractor, determine their schedule and when they can begin your project. Make sure they can commit to starting the project and staying with that schedule until finished. Good communication and agreements up front will assure smooth scheduling and on-time completion.

### Ordering Materials

Begin thinking about the items that need to be selected and ordered. Materials that are not on-site and on time, will cause delays, raise costs, and extend the completion date.



*Make sure to start out with a dry basement to avoid basement mold and mildew issues.*



**Comparing Apples to Apples**  
→ look online for finished basement photos



*“Ask yourself how a contractor can do the same job others can for half the price –He can’t”*

# Selecting A Contractor

*Know what to look for in the sea of choices*

You’re about to turn your cold and empty basement into your families dream space. Study the major and sometime subtle differences between contractors and their process, as you’re not only investing in the end product but their “process”.

The process is how the contractor treats you in that long gap between the signing of the contract and the completion of the project. Listed below are questions to ask before deciding on a contractor. Price is not the only reason to select a contractor.

## Contractor Qualifications:

1. Can the contractor provide a current license?
2. Is his license status verifiable on the state website?
3. Can the contractor provide a certificate of insurance?
4. How long have they been in business?
5. Do they specialize in basement finishing?
6. Does the contractor, or his company, appear to operate in a professional manner?
7. Does the contractor, or his company have a truck with name and phone number on it?
8. Are the checks to be made payable to a business or personal account?
9. Will they work normal business hours or does it appear to be a weekend or side business?

## Contractor Business Management:

1. How long did it take to receive the final proposal?
2. Is the proposal detailed?
3. Does it include a contract?
4. Who applies for the permit?
5. How much of a deposit is required and when is the balance due?
6. Exactly when will the construction start and finish?
7. What is the contractor’s warranty and specifically what is covered?

## Beware of low bids

Everyone wants to get a good deal and save a little money but be careful when applying this principle to finishing your basement. In home remodeling, you truly get what you pay for. If you are looking strictly for a low bid, you will find one. It doesn’t take magic to produce a low bid. It is, however, magical when a low bid project is completed without delays, cost overruns and numerous problems.

Each project can use over 50 subcontractors (subs) and suppliers and there are at least 10 local choices for the general contractor to select from. That makes at least 500 choices for the contractor.

A contractor can use their experience and expertise to work for or against you by choosing subcontractors that can do the best job on time, or low bid subs that will get it done sometime.

- A good contractor will not use low bids from subcontractors or suppliers just to get the job. His reputation is on the line. Sometimes, his bid may feel a bit high, but keep in mind; his main concern is giving you exactly what you want.
- A bad contractor, on the other hand, will often use the lowest priced subcontractors and suppliers because his goal is the low bid. Your search for a “good deal” makes you his target. Ask yourself how a contractor can do the same job others can for half the price. He can’t, without resulting in low quality materials and workmanship. His level of quality, your satisfaction and even his own reputation are of little concern.

## Contractor Reputation

First impressions are often correct, so trust your intuition as you connect with a contractor for the first time. Since the initial bid is the first action, be very watchful on how long it takes to receive a return phone call. If they don’t call you back when trying to get your business, they surely will not improve communication during the full construction cycle. If you are waiting for more than two weeks for initial design or estimate, find someone else.

The way a contractor handles communication in general, is a key indicator in predicting future success with him on your project. You should not only be able to reach the contractor through his office for general questions, but also directly by cell phone for imperative questions or issues.

Let’s face it, during construction you will be letting complete

strangers into your home, and likely when you’re not even there. The contractor should furnish you with a list of all the sub-contractors on the job. If you experience any hesitation in him doing so, consider optional general contractors who will supply this information.

Contact the Better Business Bureau to see if there are, or have been any complaints filed. Make sure they are members of the BBB and have successfully resolved any complaints that might have been filed. Investigate if the complaints seem excessive.

Ask the contractor to furnish a minimum of 10 to 12 references of comparable projects, ask to look at their portfolio of work and talk with other homeowners that have used the service. A reputable contractor will love the chance to showcase their work and give you references.

Finally, a thorough contractor will provide you with a lien waiver that certifies you have paid him in full. Never sign a contract that does not specify one. Never assume that each contractor’s bid includes the same materials or services as others. Ask about anything of which you are unsure of, and always refer to the “Apples to Apples” general guidelines on selecting a contractor.

## Contractor Relations

Remodeling is a complex job that requires constant communication and attention to detail. The level of attention a contractor gives you up front and prior to signing a contract, should not stop there. His attentiveness should run through the entire job.

When you finally select a contractor and enter into a contract, treat your association like a partnership. Respect for each other is critical. Your contractor should not try to shortchange you, and you should not shortchange him. This would create an adversarial relationship that you do not want.



**AUTHORIZED  
CONSTRUCTION**  
CITY OF CHAMPLIN  
INSPECTION RECORD

SITE ADDRESS: 9203 White Oaks Tr  
 NATURE OF WORK: Basement Finish  
 USE OF BUILDING: SED  
 BUILDING PERMIT NO: 11-1116 DATE ISSUED: 12-26-11  
 CONTRACTOR: Edverson Homes

**APPROVALS**

FOOTING: \_\_\_\_\_  
Please See Comments Sheet Above This Item Signed

FOUNDATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
See See Schedule Sheet Above This Item Signed

**ROUGH-INS**

FRAMING: \_\_\_\_\_  
 INSULATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PLUMBING: \_\_\_\_\_  
 HEATING: \_\_\_\_\_  
See See Schedule Sheet Above This Item Signed

**FINALS**

BUILDING: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PLUMBING: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ELECTRICAL: \_\_\_\_\_  
 MECHANICAL: \_\_\_\_\_  
 FIREPLACE: \_\_\_\_\_  
See See Schedule Sheet Above This Item Signed

**NOTICE**  
 This card must be posted in a conspicuous place and maintained until all inspections are completed.  
 FOR INSPECTIONS CALL 431-3829

*George Hart*

COMPARE  
**Apples  
to apples**

**Progress?**

Follow up  
with contractor  
tonight!

## Understanding Inspections

*How the process works*

### Legal Inspections

A final inspection is conducted when the contractor has completed everything in the contract. The city inspector will give you a certificate of occupancy or sign off on the permit card when the work meets applicable codes and standards. Make sure your insurance company knows the job is completed and you have the proper coverage.

### Personal Inspections

You should conduct your own inspections as well. Walk thru the project with the contractor during the process and at the end to confirm that everything is completed properly and the quality of workmanship meets the agreed standards. If there are items that the contractor needs to address, make a list of the issues. This “punch list” of “Things to do” should be taken care of before the final payment is made.

### Lien Wavers and Final Payment

When the final payment is made, the contractor must give you a “Lien Waiver” before he says goodbye. This legal document states he has been paid in full for the work he was contracted to do. If you fail to get this document, he and his subcontractors could claim they were not paid, and sue you for the original amount. This could turn into a legal nightmare. Document everything.

The contractor should schedule all inspections with the appropriate city, town, or municipality. Inspections are required for: *Framing, Heating, Plumbing, Fireplace, Electrical, Insulation* – and any other inspections required by local municipalities.

*“Let’s be realistic, building codes are enforced to insure basic safety, but will never take the place of true construction ethics. Code books are only the minimum standards that a contractor must follow.”*

## Behind the Scenes

*What’s really goes into your construction?*

### More than Meets the Eye

Often it’s the little extra things a contractor will do that will make the project a real success not only upon completion but for years to come. The following four pages will give you additional knowledge including simple upgrade ideas that a contractor may or may not build into your basement. These are things you should be aware of or ask for.

Let’s be realistic, building codes are enforced to insure basic safety, but will never take the place of true construction ethics. Code books are only the minimum standards that a contractor must follow. Beyond codes is the wide open area of contractor craftsmanship. What will the contractor do to assure a fixture will never fall due to his installation? Any contractor has numerous “tried and true” techniques that the next guy may or may not even know about. It’s the “smart things to do” as if he were building it for himself, that secures his work and your confidence in a job well built.

Study these pages thoroughly to put yourself in a position of knowledge well beyond that of the average homeowner. Be familiar with these “behind the scenes” methods and materials to ensure superior building standards.



*Framing is the skeletal structure when finishing a basement. Always use standard 2” x 4” construction as the structural integrity of all other building materials: such as wiring, sheetrock, cabinets and even doors are dependant on it.*

# Behind the Scenes

What's really goes into your construction?



## Drywall

- Use 4'x12' 5/8" ceiling rock and 1/2" wall rock, if possible, for less waste and lower costs.
- If 1/2" Strong Rock® is available, use it.
- Corner bead should be clamped or mudded on, NO nails.
- Use nails along drywall edges but screws the remaining areas to save time and money.
- Install drywall 1/2" above the concrete floor to prevent moisture damage
- Use fans in each room to move the air to help with the dry time.
- Allow at least one day drying time between coats and up to two days in high humidity.
- Use a vacuum attached to the sander when sanding the walls.
- Use sweeping compound on the floor when cleaning up dust and then shop vac everything.
- Always install sheetrock perpendicular to joists for ceiling installations, and horizontally on walls.
- Always turn off the furnace when sanding the drywall.
- Use Dura-Bond® drywall compound around corners and around tub instead of standard mud, this makes those areas stronger and water resistant.



## Painting

- If possible, spray all varnish and sealer. The finished product is 100% better.
- Stain is to be brushed on and wiped off with a rag.
- Always putty the nail holes before the varnish is installed.
- Instead of using standard varnish for the final coat, use catalyzed lacquer which is a much harder product that will last forever.
- Once all woodwork is completed, it must be taped and papered off. Do not allow any freehand painting as you'll need to clean up a mess later.
- If possible, painted woodwork should be sprayed on and not brushed.
- Caulk all joints and nail holes prior to painting.
- Use midrange to high quality "eggshell" finish, It has the look of flat paint but is much more durable and cleanable.
- Walls are not paint-ready after the drywall is sanded, they will need to be primed first.
- After priming, all scratches and dents must be spackled, sanded and re-primed before final painting.
- Eggshell paint always reveals more imperfections in the finish. Use a halogen light, shining at an angle, to spot these problems and spackle, sand and re-prime.
- More time will be spent on wall preparation than actually painting.
- If all the trim work and cabinets are delivered unfinished, install them first before finishing.
- Knock-down and smooth ceilings must be painted with ceiling white paint and tinted if needed. Paint must be sprayed, not rolled on. It must be sprayed one coat in each direction or lines will show up.



## Plumbing

- Install shut off valves for each hot and cold water line.
- Use expanding foam under the tub or fiberglass shower to keep it from flexing or cracking. It will also keep the tub warmer.
- Purchase plumbing fixtures from a wholesale house rather than big-box stores as you get better quality and a full warranty for labor and materials.
- Install wood backing for the pedestal sink to fasten securely.
- For better comfort install the shower head at 7', not 6'.
- Use the plumber's standard fixtures, it will save money.
- Always install a back-up sump pump for your drain tile system.
- For more specialized fixtures go to a plumbing showroom, a design staff will be available to help you with selections.



## Heating

- Use 10"x 6" ceiling heads/registers and 6" hard pipe for the forced air heat runs. Do not use flex because it slows the airflow down.
- Make a connection to cold air return duct so no construction dust is sucked into the furnace.
- If possible, use a zoned heating system with its own thermostat.
- Use 14"x 6" grills and 6" or 7" hard pipe or flex for the cold air returns. Grills should be 14" above floor, not near the ceiling. This will allow the warm air to be pulled down to the floor to evenly heat the space.



## Flooring

- Use a good high-density carpet pad to put over concrete. Good quality carpet and pads will save money in the long run.
- Carpet with no pattern will cost less to install. Also, carpet comes in different widths, pick one that is close to the room width for fewer seams and less waste.
- Take the time to research the flooring products for each room and how it will be used.
- Use ceramic or porcelain tile, it doesn't cost much more than vinyl to install.
- Don't be afraid to use wood flooring products over concrete. They provide easy maintenance and long durability.



## Cabinets

- Never rule out custom cabinets they are not always more expensive. You get exactly what you want and they are far better built.
- Meet with the cabinet designer as soon as possible to allow enough time to be designed, built and delivered. They will take 3 to 5 weeks to get.
- When ordering cabinets, select a finished interior and hidden hinges. This will make cleaning easier and allow for easy door adjustment.

# Behind the Scenes

*What's really goes into your construction?*



## Trim and Doors

- All doors should be pre-hung with one side of trim/casing applied and the other side loose to be installed by carpenter.
- There is a wide range of quality when it comes to interior doors. Hollow core doors will save you money but solid core doors are constructed better and more damage resistant. They also look nicer and operate better.
- Purchase doors and trim at a lumberyard rather than a big-box store. They offer a better selection and are generally of higher quality.
- When purchasing baseboard and casing, buy solid wood instead of veneered. A more even stain color can be achieved on solid wood.
- Use pine or cedar shims, not plastic.
- Make sure all mitered joints are glued and pin nailed.
- Order the door hinges to match the doorknob finish.
- All doors must be hung 1/2" above concrete floor if there is carpet. Never install a doorjamb directly on concrete as moisture can wick up into it, and it will swell and delaminate.
- All doors must be shimmed at a minimum of 3 points on both sides.
- The gap on the top and knob side of each door should be equal.
- All mitered joints must touch, NO gaps or putty.
- Strike plates for doorknobs must match the inset in the doorjamb.
- Do not use maple trim or doors if you plan to paint the trim work, use MDF materials as they come pre-primed and at a much lower cost.



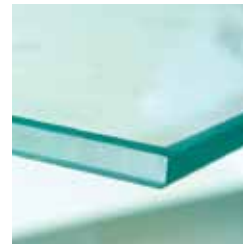
## Electrical

- Think about the location of outlets, switches, phone jacks and lights before the electrician arrives. Make notes on the blueprint and imagine everything in the room.
- Do a walk-thru with the electrician when he starts.
- Each area or room should be on it's own circuit.
- Use the soft plastic wall plates rather than the hard plastic.
- Use fiberglass electrical boxes, they are much stronger.
- All outside walls need an electrical box with an air-tight rubber flange.
- All light fixtures and ceiling fans are to be UL listed.
- When using fiberglass in the ceiling for sound deadening, recessed can lights must be "insulation rated".
- Use childproof outlets.
- Use dimmers and 3-way switches when possible to make the lighting friendlier.



## Concrete and Stone

- Make sure there are no water problems. Check your sump pump, window wells, landscaping and gutters for any issues.
- Repair all cracks in the floor or walls using appropriate product for each situation.
- Waterproof the interior walls if there is dampness or water issues.
- When designing the face for the fireplace, use cultured stone. It is an inexpensive choice over natural stone and looks the same.



## Glass

- Get a custom made shower door. The units at the big-box stores are one size fits all, they never look good and they leak.
- Use a 1/4" custom cut mirror if possible. Have the cabinet shop make a frame for the mirror. It can be stained and designed to match the cabinets.
- Use glass doors and shelves in the upper bar cabinets when possible. It will make them seem bigger and add a great design feature.



## Rough Framing

- All walls should be framed 16" on center.
- Bottom plates of all walls will require pressure treated material.
- All plates should be installed using construction adhesive and be power nailed to the concrete.
- Always frame walls with 2 x 4's.
- Soffits should be built of plywood or OSB and 2 x 4's, not 2 x 2's.
- Always use a 5-foot level to plumb the walls for the most accurate reading.



## Insulation

- All electrical and plumbing penetrations through the top plates need to be filled with expanding foam or caulk to stop air movement.
- Use fiberglass batts for sound deadening in walls and ceiling.
- Use closed-cell sprayed foam when insulating the outside walls. It is more expensive but provides a higher R-value and prevents air infiltration and mold issues. Finally, it offers superior acoustic qualities.
- When installing ridged foam panels, always tape the seams and use a foil-covered product that will reflect the heat back into the living space.
- An open wall cavity can aid in the oxygen flow of a fire. It is imperative to use fiberglass batts in these areas for effective fire blocking.
- When using fiberglass batts, use 4 mill poly, caulk around the edges and tape the seams.

# Forms & Check Sheets

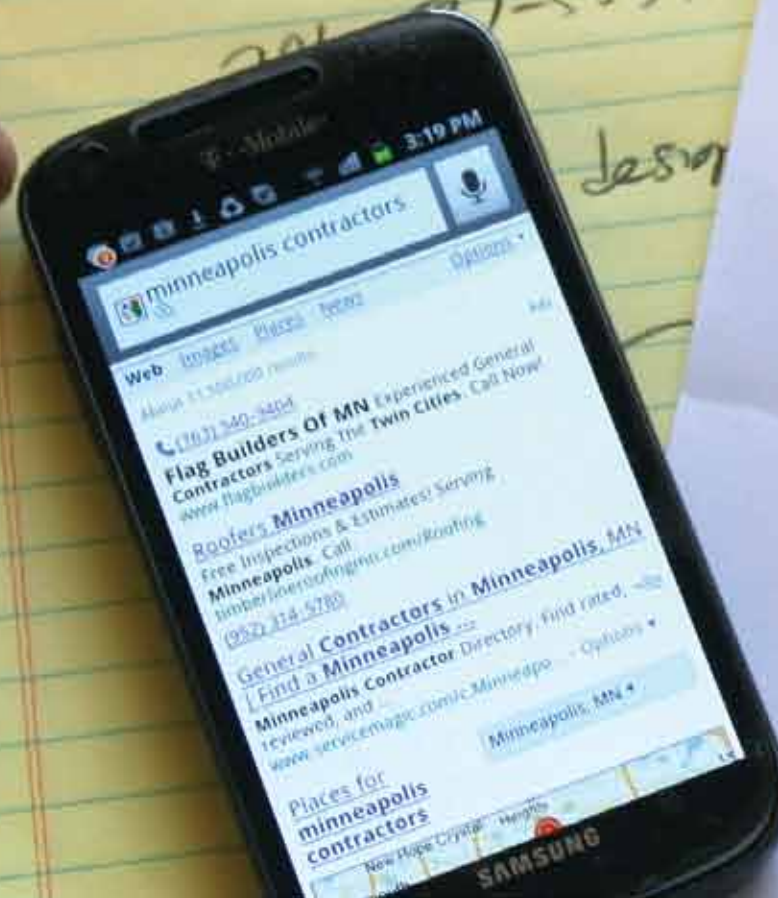
Applying "Apples to Apples"



TOP FLIGHT

- Ace Contracting  
701-554-1006

- Wood Side  
Contracting  
701-557-5537



Apples  
to apples

FORMS & CHECKSHEETS

## Contact Information

Homeowner: Richard  
Address: 406 Pine  
City/Zip: Maple Ridge  
Home Phone: 306-421-  
Cell Phone: 306-390-22  
Email: RCade@aol.co

Contractor: Please provide a copy of your "Certificate" from your state / city "License".

## Plans

- Homeowner to provide basement plans
- Contractor to design basic floor plan
- Contractor or design

Contact Information

Homeowner: _____	Contractor: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City/Zip: _____	City/Zip: _____
Home Phone: _____	Home Phone: _____
Cell Phone: _____	Cell Phone: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____
	State/City License number: _____
	Certificate of Contractor's Insurance: _____ _____

Contractor: Please provide a copy of your "Certificate of Contractor's Insurance" and a copy of your state / city "License".

Plans

a) Homeowner to provide basement plans	Y/N
b) Contractor to design basic floor plan	Y/N
c) Contractor or designer to design complete 3D plans with elevations	Y/N
d) Will a design fee be charged to the homeowner?	Y/N
e) Design fee amount \$ _____	

General Checklist

a) When can you start the basement project?	Start Date: _____
b) When will you finish the basement project?	Completion Date: _____
c) What warranty do you provide for:	
Your work? _____	
Your subcontractor's work? _____	
Materials used? _____	
d) Please provide ten references of similar work including three projects we can visit.	

Name: _____	Phone: _____
Name: _____	Phone: _____
Name: _____	Phone: _____
Name: _____	Phone: _____
Name: _____	Phone: _____
Name: _____	Phone: _____
Name: _____	Phone: _____
Name: _____	Phone: _____
Address: _____	
Name: _____	Phone: _____
Address: _____	
Name: _____	Phone: _____
Address: _____	

Cleanup

a) Please describe what actions you take to keep the basement, as well as the rest of the house, clean during construction.

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b) Will the furnace and ductwork be professionally cleaned? Y/N

Suppliers and Subcontractors

Countertops: _____	Phone: _____
Ceramic: _____	Phone: _____
Carpet/vinyl: _____	Phone: _____
Wood floor: _____	Phone: _____
Stone/brick: _____	Phone: _____
Cabinets: _____	Phone: _____
Plumbing: _____	Phone: _____
Lighting: _____	Phone: _____
Insulation: _____	Phone: _____
Lumber Yard: _____	Phone: _____
Dumpster: _____	Phone: _____
Portable Toilet: _____	Phone: _____
Finish Cleaning: _____	Phone: _____
Drywall Contractor: _____	Phone: _____
Plumber: _____	Phone: _____
Electrician: _____	Phone: _____
HVAC: _____	Phone: _____
Painter: _____	Phone: _____
Framing Carpenter: _____	Phone: _____
Fireplace Installer: _____	Phone: _____
Finish Carpenter: _____	Phone: _____
Designer: _____	Phone: _____

Concrete Walls and Floor

a) Are there any repairs to be made to the concrete?

Y/N

b) Is a new sump pump or backup system needed?

Y/N

c) Are there any cracks in the floor?

Y/N

d) Do the cracks need to be caulked? (If no, why not?)

Y/N

e) Do the concrete walls need to be sealed or waterproofed?

Y/N

f) Are there any moisture, mold or water issues that need to be corrected?

Y/N

Rough Framing

a) Will any new windows or patio doors need to be added or replaced?

Y/N

Brand

Style

☐ Vinyl

☐ Wood

☐ Metal Clad

☐ Aluminum

☐ Double Pane glass

☐ Triple pane glass

☐ Low-e

b) Will an egress window be needed?

Y/N

Location:

c) What type of egress window well?

☐ Metal

☐ Cedar

☐ Treated

☐ Decorative Block

☐ Size

d) Studs used will be:

☐ 2 x 4

☐ 2 x 6

☐ Wood

☐ Steel

☐ 16"

☐ 24"

e) Will access panels need to be framed out for plumbing or mechanicals?

Y/N

Where?

Heating and Cooling

- a) What form of heat is required?
- ☐ Forced air:

☐ Baseboard water:

☐ Baseboard electric:

☐ Electric floor cables:
- \_\_\_\_\_Cold air returns

\_\_\_\_\_Single zone

\_\_\_\_\_Single zone

\_\_\_\_\_Bathroom
- \_\_\_\_\_Heat runs

\_\_\_\_\_Separate zones

\_\_\_\_\_Separate zones

\_\_\_\_\_Bar floor

☐ 50 cfm fan

☐ 70 cfm fan

☐ 100 cfm fan

☐ 150 cfm fan

Fireplace

- a) If a fireplace is to be installed, will it be gas or wood? \_\_\_\_\_
- Make and model \_\_\_\_\_
- Style of front or doors \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Will a fan be installed? Y/N
- c) What finish will be applied to the face: stone, brick, granite or ceramic? \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Will a raised hearth be installed? Y/N
- How high off the floor? \_\_\_\_\_

Plumbing

- a) Is the bathroom and bar sink waste lines already roughed in? Y/N
- b) Will the concrete floor have to be removed for waste lines? Y/N
- c) Will waste and supply lines match existing lines? Y/N
- Type: \_\_\_\_\_
- d) What make and model # of sinks, tubs, toilets, faucets and showers will be installed?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Is a larger or additional water heater needed? Y/N
- Make and Model # \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Is a de-humidifier needed? Y/N
- Make and Model # \_\_\_\_\_
- g) Does the refrigerator icemaker need a water line? Y/N
- h) Will a steam shower, rain showerhead, multiple showerheads, or body sprays be installed? Y/N
- Make and Model # \_\_\_\_\_
- Make and Model # \_\_\_\_\_
- Make and Model # \_\_\_\_\_
- i) Do any shut-off valves need to be relocated? Y/N
- j) Are there any existing pipes that have leaks that need to be fixed? Y/N
- Where: \_\_\_\_\_

Electrical

- a) Does the existing electric panel have enough openings for new breakers? Y/N
- b) Is a new sub-panel needed? Y/N
- Make and Model # \_\_\_\_\_
- Location: \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Will there be a walkthrough with homeowner for placement of fixtures? Y/N
- d) How many outlets and switches will be installed? \_\_\_\_\_
- Type of switch: \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Will homeowner purchase light fixtures? Y/N
- f) What is the budget allowance for light fixtures? \_\_\_\_\_
- g) How many Cat-5 (phone) and RG 6 (cable) will be installed? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- h) How many recessed ceiling fixtures or stair lights will be installed? \_\_\_\_\_
- Style of trim ring: \_\_\_\_\_
- i) How many smoke detectors and CO detectors will be installed? \_\_\_\_\_
- Brand: \_\_\_\_\_
- j) How many dimmer switches will be installed? \_\_\_\_\_
- Brand and type: \_\_\_\_\_
- k) Does an existing alarm system have to be tied in? Y/N
- l) How many hookups for dishwasher, microwave, refrigerator, stove, oven, and garbage disposal will be installed? \_\_\_\_\_
- m) Who will provide the low voltage company to install speakers and theater system wiring?
- ☐ Homeowner
- ☐ Contractor

- n) How many speakers will be roughed in? \_\_\_\_\_
- Wall or flush mount: \_\_\_\_\_
- o) How many volume controls will be installed? \_\_\_\_\_
- p) Is under cabinet lighting needed? Y/N
- Make and model: \_\_\_\_\_
- q) Is in cabinet lighting needed? Y/N
- Make and model: \_\_\_\_\_
- r) Is a hot tub wiring rough in needed? Y/N
- s) Main panel upgrade needed? Y/N
- Make and amps: \_\_\_\_\_
- t) Is a sauna heater needed? Y/N
- u) Are ceiling fans needed? Y/N
- How many and where? \_\_\_\_\_
- v) Are sconce or pendant lights needed? Y/N
- How many? \_\_\_\_\_
- w) Is a heated floor needed? Y/N
- Make: \_\_\_\_\_
- What voltage? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Standard Thermostat
- ☐ Setback Thermostat
- Misc: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Insulation

a) What type of insulation will be installed?

- ☐ Blown
- ☐ Ridged
- ☐ Sprayed
- ☐ Batts
- ☐ Fiberglass
- ☐ Foam

\_\_\_\_\_ Wall R-value

\_\_\_\_\_ Ceiling R-value

b) Will ceiling soundboard be installed? Y/N

c) Will a 4-mil vapor barrier need to be installed? Y/N

Drywall

a) What is the ceiling height? \_\_\_\_\_

b) What thickness of drywall will be used on walls? \_\_\_\_\_

c) What thickness of drywall will be used on ceilings? \_\_\_\_\_

d) Will moisture resistant drywall be used in the bathroom? Y/N

e) Will walls and ceiling have three coats of drywall mud? Y/N

f) How will drywall ceilings be finished?

- ☐ Spray texture
- ☐ Knockdown
- ☐ Smooth

g) Will nails or screws be used to install drywall? \_\_\_\_\_

h) Will cement board be installed in areas where tile will be installed? Y/N

Painting

a) Will the walls be primed first? Y/N

b) How many coats of wall paint? \_\_\_\_\_

c) What brand and quality level of paint will be used? \_\_\_\_\_

d) Will the walls be painted with flat, eggshell or semi-gloss? \_\_\_\_\_

e) Will the wall paint be rolled or sprayed on? \_\_\_\_\_

f) Will the ceilings be painted? Y/N

g) Will the walls be spackled to remove blemishes before the final coat? Y/N

h) Will the woodwork be stained/varnished or enameled? \_\_\_\_\_

i) Will the varnishing or enameling be brushed or sprayed? \_\_\_\_\_

j) How many paint colors included? \_\_\_\_\_

Cabinets

a) Will drawings be made of the cabinets? Y/N

b) Is a showroom available for cabinet selections? Y/N

c) Will I be able to meet with a designer? Y/N

d) Will custom or boxed cabinets be installed? \_\_\_\_\_

e) Cabinets will be made of: oak, cherry, maple, birch, hickory, MDF or other? \_\_\_\_\_

f) What features are included in the cabinets? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

g) Will cabinets be pre-finished or finished on site? \_\_\_\_\_

h) Will crown molding be installed? Y/N

What size? \_\_\_\_\_

Finish Carpentry

- a) What type of wood will be used for all finish carpentry? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) What style of base and casing will be used? \_\_\_\_\_
- c) What style of interior doors will be used? \_\_\_\_\_
- d) What type of rails, posts, and spindles will be used for staircase? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e) Will wainscoting be used? Y/N  
Height and style: \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Will ceiling crown molding be used? Y/N  
Width and style: \_\_\_\_\_
- g) Will skirt boards be used? Y/N
- h) Will ledges be used? Y/N
- i) Will a column be used? Y/N  
Size and type: \_\_\_\_\_
- j) Will a cased opening or arch be used? Y/N
- k) What type of closet shelving will be installed? \_\_\_\_\_
- l) Will extension jambs need to be installed on the windows? Y/N  
Material type: \_\_\_\_\_
- m) Will a fireplace mantle be installed? Y/N
- n) Will the stair treads and risers need to be changed? Y/N  
Material type: \_\_\_\_\_
- o) Is a new handrail needed? Y/N

Countertops

- a) What type of top will be installed in the bathroom? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) What type of top will be installed in the kitchen or bar? \_\_\_\_\_
- c) What type of backsplash for the bathroom? \_\_\_\_\_
- d) What type of backsplash for the kitchen or bar? \_\_\_\_\_
- e) What is the budget allowance for countertops? \_\_\_\_\_

Ceramic

- a) Will ceramic tile be installed on the bathroom floor? Y/N
- b) Will there be a ceramic shower? Y/N  
Which areas? \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Will ceramic be installed on the tub walls? Y/N
- d) Will ceramic be installed in front of the patio door? Y/N
- e) Will ceramic be installed in the bar or kitchen area? Y/N
- f) Will ceramic be installed around the fireplace? Y/N
- g) Will there be a ceramic backsplash installed? Y/N
- h) What are the total square feet of ceramic? \_\_\_\_\_
- i) What is the budget allowance for ceramic? \_\_\_\_\_

Stone and Brick

- a) Will stone or brick be installed on the fireplace?

Y/N

Selection: \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Will stone or brick be installed on a wall or post?

Y/N

Selection: \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Will stone be dry stacked or with mortared joints?

\_\_\_\_\_
- d) Will stone be installed with tarpaper, wire mesh and concrete or glued to the wall?

\_\_\_\_\_
- e) Will the mortar be gray or colored?

\_\_\_\_\_
- f) What will the hearth be made of?

\_\_\_\_\_
- g) Any special corners or design?

\_\_\_\_\_

Flooring: Carpet, Vinyl and Wood

- a) Which areas will have carpet installed?

\_\_\_\_\_
- b) Which areas will have vinyl installed?

\_\_\_\_\_
- c) Which areas will have wood floors installed?

\_\_\_\_\_
- d) What material will be installed on the stairs?

\_\_\_\_\_
- e) What material will be installed under the stairs?

\_\_\_\_\_
- f) What is the budget allowance for the carpet, vinyl, and wood floors?

\_\_\_\_\_

Glass

- a) Will a shower door be installed?

Y/N

What type and style? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Will the shower door be stock or custom-built?

\_\_\_\_\_
- c) Will a mirror be installed?

Y/N

☐ Stock

☐ Custom built

d) Will there be any glass shelves or doors?

Y/N

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

e) Is glass block needed?

Y/N

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

Miscellaneous

- a) Will contractor install all appliances? Y/N
- b) Will contractor install bathroom towel bar and paper holder? Y/N
- c) Will contractor install all glass products? Y/N
- d) What finish of hinge and door knob hardware will be installed? \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Which style doorknobs will be installed? Model # \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Will the basement be professionally cleaned upon completion? Y/N
- g) Will the contractor provide a dumpster to dispose of construction trash? Y/N
- h) Will the contractor provide a portable toilet for the workers? Y/N

Change Orders

What is your policy for “Change Order Requests”? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Payment Schedule

Total Project Cost \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- a) A down payment in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ will be due when the contract is signed.
- b) A payment in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ will be due when \_\_\_\_\_ is completed.  
  
A payment in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ will be due when \_\_\_\_\_ is completed.  
  
A payment in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ will be due when \_\_\_\_\_ is completed.  
  
A payment in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ will be due when \_\_\_\_\_ is completed.  
  
A payment in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ will be due when \_\_\_\_\_ is completed.  
  
A payment in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ will be due when \_\_\_\_\_ is completed.
- c) How will any extras that are not included in this proposal be treated? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d) This proposal is valid for \_\_\_\_\_ days.
- e) Contractor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Basement Costs

I have talked with hundreds of homeowners over the years about the cost of finishing a basement. Most are surprised how much it costs to complete the project with the features they want. The more features and square feet that you add, the more it will cost. Finished basements can cost from \$30.00 to \$200.00 per square foot. Actual costs will differ depending on location, sq ft, materials used, and labor costs. These numbers include all material, labor, overhead and profit.

Listed below are the details of an actual 1150 sq ft basement remodel completed in 2011 for \$65,000.00 in Minneapolis. The prices below include all material, labor and builder markup.

Electrical wiring- recessed cans, outlets, switches and low voltage	\$ 7,149.00
Framing carpenter	\$ 2,187.00
Painting- stain, varnish and eggshell wall paint	\$ 5,327.00
Drywall- ceiling and walls with knockdown ceiling	\$ 5,853.00
Lumber- framing, 6 panel doors, maple base and casing	\$ 5,234.00
Plumbing- shower, toilet, waste/water lines and faucets	\$ 3,873.00
Flooring- wood floor, ceramic, carpet and granite top	\$11,536.00
Finish carpentry- install all cabinets, doors and trim	\$ 3,266.00
Custom cabinets- vanity, bar, mantel and entertainment center	\$11,385.00
Dumpster- 20 yard	\$ 455.00
Permit	\$ 438.00
Fireplace- gas unit, gas line, fan and thermostat	\$ 4,000.00
Shower door & mirror- custom clear glass with chrome trim	\$ 1,137.00
Professional cleaning	\$ 260.00
Stone work- cultured fireplace stone	\$ 1,340.00
Heating- ceiling heats, cold air returns and exhaust bath fan	\$ 1,300.00
Portable toilet	\$ 260.00
TOTAL	\$65,000.00

Time Line to Finish a Basement

It generally takes 7 to 10 weeks to complete an average basement. Additional features and square footage or frequent Work Order Changes may extend the project. Many of the tasks will overlap each other.

Select your materials as soon as possible. It may take from 2 to 5 weeks for ordered materials to arrive, especially for cabinets. Do this quickly to avoid slowing down the entire project. Use in-stock materials whenever possible to minimize delays. Work on this while the contractor is applying for the permits.

Don't hesitate to use the Internet to find your materials. In most cases, you will find a greater selection with faster turnaround at a lower cost. The best items to look for are bath/bar faucets, sinks, light fixtures, speakers, audio equipment, and tin ceiling panels.

Building and mechanical permits	3 to 10 days
Frame walls and soffits	2 to 6 days
Rough-in HVAC	1 to 3 day
Rough-in plumbing	1 to 2 days
Rough-in electrical	2 to 4 days
Insulation	1 to 2 days
Gas fireplace	1 to 2 days
Inspections	1 to 2 days
Sheetrock	7 to 10 days
Cabinet and trim installation	3 to 7 days
Stain/varnish and painting	6 to 14 days
Ceramic	1 to 7 days
Stone/brick	1 to 4 days
Countertop installation	1 to 2 days
Final electric	1 to 3 days
Final plumbing	1 to 3 days
Final electrical	1 to 3 days
Final HVAC	1 to 2 days
Final trim	1 to 2 days
Carpet	1 to 2 days
TOTAL	7 – 10 weeks



# Glossary of Terms

**Access Panel-** A panel made of wood or plastic to cover over a plumbing or electrical device in a wall or ceiling for future access.

**Air-to-Air Heat Exchanger** - A machine that removes stale air and brings in fresh air.

**Cased Opening** - An opening in a wall wrapped in a wood jamb and wood casing.

**CAT 5-** Category 5 phone line consisting of eight wires.

**Cement Board-** A concrete board used on shower walls and ceilings to adhere ceramic tile too.

**Certificate of Insurance-** A document issued by the contractors insurance company that states he is covered in case an accident should occur.

**CFM** - Cubic feet per minute, the measurement of air movement with a bath fan.

**Change Order** - A document stating a change in construction materials or design that both parties' sign that states what is being added and the cost.

**CO Detector-** Carbon monoxide detector

**Crown Molding** - A decorative wood trim piece installed in the ceiling corner.

**Cultured Stone-** A man-made stone made out of cement used on fireplaces.

**Dimmer Switch-** A light switch that has the ability to dim the amount a light fixture produces.

**Dry Stack Stone-** A stone face that is installed without mortar in the joints.

**Eggshell Paint-** Paint that has a higher sheen that is more durable and can be cleaned.

**Egress Window** - A window installed below grade to allow escape in the case of fire.

**Electric Floor Heat Cables-** Cables installed on the concrete floor below the ceramic to heat the tile and room.

**Extension Jambs-** Pieces of wood or drywall added to the existing window jambs.

**GFI-** Ground fault interrupter, an outlet in a bathroom or bar that protects you from shock.

**Humidifier-** A device that is installed on a furnace to put humidity into the living space.

**HVAC-** Abbreviation for heating, ventilating, and air conditioning

**Ledges-** A wood plank installed over the top of the concrete block.

**Lien Waiver** - A legal document that states that the contractor has been paid in full by the homeowner.

**MDF-** Medium Density Fiberboard: specific material used in trim work, doors and cabinets that can be painted.

**Pressure Treated Wood-** Lumber treated with chemicals to make them rot resistant. They are usually applied to the floor when framing a wall to minimize the risk of water damage.

**Punch List-** A list of things to finish, change or repair by the contractor. Homeowner usually helps to create this list.

**Rain Shower-** A very large showerhead that when running, looks like rain.

**Raised Hearth-** A raised platform in front of the fireplace made of stone or wood.

**Recessed Light-** A light mounted inside the ceiling that uses a flood bulb.

**RG 6-** Cable TV wire

**Rough-in work-** The installation of plumbing, heating and electrical devices before drywall is installed.

**Sconce Light-** A light fixture mounted on the wall.

**Skirt Boards** - A wood trim board installed on the walls next to the treads and risers of the staircase.

**Soffits** - A boxed in area of the ceiling that covers ductwork, plumbing and electrical made of lumber and covered in drywall.

**Sone-** Sound rating for bath fans, the lower the number the quieter. Preferably less than 1.0.

**Sound board-** A fibrous board applied to a ceiling or walls for noise reduction.

**Stair Light-** A small rectangular light installed in the wall above the skirt boards to illuminate the stairs.

**Steam Shower-** A device installed in a shower that produces steam at high temperatures.

**Sub-Panel-** An electrical box added to the main panel to allow for extra circuits.

**Sump Pump-** A pump in a basket used to remove water from a drain tile system.

**Vapor Barrier-** Plastic installed over fiberglass insulation that prevents moisture from entering the wall cavity.

**Wainscoting-** Wood paneling that covers the lower portion of a wall at 32" to 38" above the floor.

**Walk Thru-** Walking with the various contractors through the project and discussing different aspects of it.

# About the Author

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## Jeff A. Edvenson

*Editor in Chief*

Jeff Edvenson has been a General Contractor working in home building and remodeling for over 20 years. He has remodeled more than 150 basements, kitchens and baths. He has built over 100 new homes and specializes in energy efficient construction practices. Jeff's vast experiences and knowledge as a General Contractor are now available to benefit homeowner's worldwide in "Comparing Apples to Apples".



## John Hermansen

*Creative Director*

John Hermansen is an accomplished Creative Director and Photographer, and in the last 20 years has created a range of intelligent and award-winning work. His creative adventure included working as Art Director for Black & Decker books where he became proficient and innovative in book publishing, set design and photo direction. Today, his creative experiences have combined into a multiplex of capabilities and he continues to create advertising campaigns, print and multimedia solutions and general brand building for a variety of clients.



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