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Category: Advice on Waterproofing Pools and Bathrooms

Subcategory: Tips on Waterproofing Pools and Bathrooms

Tip: Repairing a Vinyl Pool Liner
If you have a vinyl-liner pool, you have probably noticed that after a while it sags or gaps at the track that holds the liner in place. This is caused by constant fluctuations in temperature over the winter which can cause the vinyl to stretch and pop out at certain spots (usually at corners or where there is plastic trim in a concrete deck that meets with the pool coping). Most of the time you can pull the vinyl up and snap it back into place in just a few minutes. Just follow these simple steps:
• Boil a kettle of water
• Pour the boiling water directly on the sagging vinyl. To make things easier, have someone pour on the boiling water, while you pull the liner into the track.
• As the hot water softens the vinyl, pull the vinyl up and into the track.
• Use a flat head screwdriver to help hold the vinyl in the track as you pull the vinyl up and into place.
• For longer splits use wooden clothes-pegs, broken in half and placed along the split every few inches.

Tip: Reparing Cracks in Swimming Pools
Your in-ground swimming pool can be seen as "underground concrete water tank", which means that if you want to waterproof it, you're going to need coating and sealants that can withstand lots of "negative hydrostatic pressure", or under-ground water pressure that passes through the substrate (your concrete pool) and presses on the back side of the pool coating. To repair hairline cracks in concrete pools use a coat of the proper chlorinated rubber or epoxy swimming pool paint. In fiberglass pools, you don't need to bother repairing tiny hairline cracks. They just mean that your fiberglass pool is weathering away naturally. If this advice on waterproofing pools and bathrooms sounds like Greek to you, you better hire a professional or you may end up doing more harm than good!

Category: Controlling Moisture Damage

Subcategory: Controlling Moisture Tips

Tip: Clearing a Clogged Footing Drain
As Aristotle said, nature abhors a vacuum. So do the holes in your foundation known as foundation or footing drains. Over time they can get clogged. You can remedy the situation yourself with your trusty garden hose if your system is equipped with

clean-outs (access pipes that allow auguring, flushing and other cleaning tasks). If not, consult a drain-cleaning professional, and go back upstairs and watch the ball game.

Tip: Controlling Mositure Damage in a Basement

It goes without saying that you should take care of water seeping into the basement before it damages stored items or fills the family room with mildew. Controlling the water's source is always preferable when attempting to block its entry. You can fix the vast majority of wet basements by controlling roof water and surface drainage. If you've been a day late and dollar short with your water control, you'll have to resort to controlling moisture damage through other means, which include a ton of products you can get at your local home center.

Tip: Handling Condensation in a Basement

When it comes to condensation in your basement, it's not the heat, it's the humidity. You can start controlling moisture damage by using a number of different methods:

• Insulate the water pipes.
• Heat the basement during the winter.
• During hot weather, use air conditioning to cool and dehumidify the air.
• Promote good ventilation—sunlight and free movement of air can quickly dry out a basement.

* Ventilation should be regulated according to the weather conditions.

During hot, humid weather or long rainy spells, windows should be closed because the outside air will probably contain more moisture than the basement air.

Tip: How to Correct an Improper Grade

No, you don't correct an improper grade by complaining to the teacher. We're not talking about that kind of grade. We're talking about the grade or pitch of the grass and shrub-covered dirt you call your lawn which needs to slope away from your home's foundation to prevent your basement from filling up with water.

You can correct the problem yourself, if it is not to extensive by following a few easy steps. Be advised, if correcting your grade involves a great deal of work and transplanting, consider having a professional excavator and landscaper handle it. 1. Scrape away loamy topsoil, then add soil or rearrange dirt as needed, using digging tools, an iron rake and a wheelbarrow. The grade should slope away from the foundation at least 1 inch per foot (2.5 cm per 30 cm) for a distance of about 3 feet (1 m) minimum but preferably 10 feet (3 m), and leave at least 8 inches (20 cm) of foundation exposed under the siding, more in snowy climates.

2. Plant grass next to the foundation and locate planting beds 5 to 6 feet (1.5 to 2 m) away from the building; or plant ground cover with a thick root system (which draws water out of the soil) rather than putting mulch (which holds water in) around the

foundation.

Tip: Membrane Characteristics

The point of a waterproofing membrane is to protect a building's visual and structural integrity by keeping water where it belongs and out of where it doesn't. To do its job and achieve total "waterproofocity", a membrane has to be:

• Impermeable. The membrane must be impermeable to prevent the passage of water.
• Flexible - membranes need to withstand any normal movement that may occur in building structures.
• Durable. The membrane must be able to retain its integrity over a long period of time.
• Designable. The membrane must lend itself to design details in a building. It must be suitable for each specific application. If a membrane cannot be applied where needed because of structural details, it is useless.
• Breathable. The membrane must be able to breathe so that moisture vapors from building interior and substrates can escape freely.
• Bondable. The membrane must be able to bond easily and readily to tiles that are fixed directly to them.
• User-friendly. The membrane must be easy to apply, relatively lightweight, non-hazardous, and environmentally safe.
• Repairable and maintainable. In exposed areas such as rooftops, the membrane should require little maintenance, and in the event of damage must be easily repairable.
• Continuous. The membrane should provide a continuous film, without areas of weakness such as overlaps, which could prove to be a potential source of water entry.
• Resistant. The membrane must withstand environmental and climatic conditions.

Tip: Sheet and Liquid Membranes

Waterproofing membranes come in two flavors. You've got your sheet membranes, and you've got your liquid membranes. Naturally, which one you use depends on what you want to do.

Sheeting membranes will give you highly trafficable surfaces (you can walk on it) and provide some insulation. You can apply sheeting membranes to your basic substrate with an adhesive. You'll need to make sure your sheets overlap by about 4". You will also have to bond them to each other with an adhesive or heat welding. Be aware that the seams are the weakest point in the system.

In general, sheeting membranes don't resist exposure very well, offer little temperature stability, and don't recover well from deformation (like most of us.) What's more, if the substrate is water logged, you'll need to vent sheet membranes or you'll have a severe bubbling problems on your hands, which stresses out your adhesive, which could cause your adhesion to fracture.

Tip: Swelled Aquifer

If you see seepage only after days of heavy rain, you may have a swelled aquifer on your hands. If leaks keep dripping for several days after the rain stops, you have a high water table (the top of an aquifer), an uphill spring or a perched water table (a small underground pond). A rising water table usually penetrates everywhere at once. Springs and perched water tables may enter along one wall. Whatever the source, you have to get rid of the water somehow. You can install a sump pump, or arrange to have your basement professionally waterproofed.

Category: Guide to Foundation Repair

Subcategory: Foundation Tips

Tip: How Capillaries Cause Cracks in Concrete
Capillaries are subversive little agents that undermine the strength of concrete by providing air spaces for moisture invaders, making it porous. They shamelessly wick moisture from the surrounding environment and bring it to the top of the concrete slab just underneath flooring materials, enabling the water, or water vapor, when it condenses, to ravage helpless flooring adhesives.

Tip: Reducing Capillaries in Concrete
Capillaries are teeny-weeny channels that form in concrete during the the curing process after excess water needed to make the concrete flow properly has evaporated. Like death and taxes, capillaries are inevitable, no matter how high a quality of concrete you make. They are almost impossible to eliminate, but they can me keep to a minimum by following a few simple steps. If you don't want to find yourself searching for a guide to basement concrete foundation repair in an attempt to fix horrendous damage, try the following:
1. Keep the water to cement ratio to a minimum (less water).
2. Control the curing and cure for as long as possible.
3. Add a high tech substance to the concrete (Admixture).
4. All of the above.

Tip: Repairing Cracks in a Concrete Foundation
Let's face it, concrete is critical to modern society, if only it would stop cracking up on us. Well, not to condone it or anything, but concrete can't help cracking. It's just the way its made. You see, there are these capillaries that form during the curing process that eventually let water in. The pressure from the moisture cracks the concrete. The only thing you can do is repair the cracks. Here's a brief guide to foundation repair for concrete:
1. Clean out cracks of any size as best you can, using a wire brush or even a strong

spray of water.
2. Fill small cracks (less than 1/8 inch) with caulk specially made for concrete. (Be sure cracks are dry before caulking.)
3. Fill larger cracks or small holes (less than a few inches) using patching products designed for concrete. These usually are in the form of a powder that is mixed with water. They typically expand as they dry and become very hard.
4. Apply sealant or paint to the concrete. One more thing. Patching compounds generally work better if the crack is damp or wet.

Tip: Repairing Stucco
Holes, crumbling, and chipped corners in stucco are pretty easy to handle. But don't ignore them, or you could be stuck with a big repair bill later on. As soon as you detect a crack in stucco, make it a point to fix it as quickly as you can.Even small cracks will let water seep into the underlying structure, where it will eventually cause damage. Over time, water and the winter freeze/thaw cycles will turn minor cracks into major problems. Patch large cracks and gaps in a stucco surface with the same stucco mix that was used on the walls, if feasible. Otherwise, use a stucco patching compound. Before you start, though, be sure to check the package instructions for specific information. Fill small cracks with all-acrylic or siliconized-acrylic sealants. If you spot large cracks but don't have time to make a thorough repair, at least seal the openings with a bead of silicone caulk to keep out water. You can peel away the caulking when you start making long-term repairs.

Tip: Sealing a Basement Floor
Sealing a concrete basement floor is a project most do-it-yourselfers can manage. Nothing to it but to do it. Be sure, however, that you follow the specific instructions and guidelines below:
• Clean away stains and soiled areas using a stiff scrub brush and a concrete cleaner, a solution of trisodium phosphate, or a phosphate-free cleaner.
• For tough stains, such as oil, try using a stain-specific, commercial product developed specifically for removing them. Refer to the package labels for additional instructions.
• Prepare the surface; using a pitching chisel or other steel-edged scraping tool, scrape away rough and uneven spots in the concrete floor.
• Sweep up and vacuum away concrete dust and other debris in cracks and control joints that could reduce adhesion.
• Wear a dust mask to avoid breathing in cement dust. If there are any cracks, trowel patching cement into the crack, smooth it out, and let it dry and cure.
• Apply the sealer; using a paintbrush, coat the perimeter of the floor with a clear concrete sealer. Read the label instructions for more specific information. Additional procedures may be recommended, such as neutralizing the alkali in the concrete before sealing it.
• For fast, thorough, and even coverage for the rest of the room apply the sealer using a

paint roller and pan or a hand-held sprayer.
• Protect the walls from the spray with drop cloths or sheets of plastic.
• Wear safety goggles and a dust mask or respirator to protect yourself.

Tip: Types of Foundations
To most of us, a foundation is a foundation is a foundation. But to building type experts, nothing could be further from the truth. The foundation wall of a building may be a cast-in-place concrete retaining or basement wall or a structural wall complete with load-bearing pilasters. These walls may can be concrete or reinforced masonry. The foundation wall system may include an earth retention system of soldier piles and wood lagging or shotcreted rock which may require waterproofing. Water removal and control are crucial for most portions of the foundation wall. In addition, thermal loading of the upper areas of the foundation wall must be addressed.

Category: Guide to Hydrostatic Pressure

Subcategory: Hydrostatic Pressure Tips

Tip: Causes of Hydrostatic Pressure
When it comes to your foundation, the pressure is always on. Everywhere you turn outside water is trying to breech your foundation walls and take a leak in your basement. Scientists and engineers and contractors call this hydrostatic pressure. You can call it whatever you want. Confused and need a guide to hydrostatic pressure? This pressure can come from anywhere: Rain running off a roof and toward your house, a high water table, and faulty gutter systems are the most common sources of hydrostatic pressure on a foundation. Wind-whipped rain is the most common cause of hydrostatic pressure on an exterior, above-grade wall. Sometimes interior condensation can be mistaken for seepage due to hydrostatic pressure. To distinguish between the two, tape a piece of aluminum foil to the inside of the foundation wall. Remove the foil after several days. If the wall side of the foil is wet, seepage is the problem. If the room side is wet, condensation is the problem (both problems can occur at the same time.)

Tip: Negative Hydrostatic Pressure
Wouldn't you just know it? Just when you thought negative hydrostatic pressure described the majority of moisture vapor transmission-related flooring problems, some wise-guy expert comes along and says it ain't so. According to Mr. Know-it-All, hydrostatic pressure can cause problems for finish flooring installations only when water is at a level above the flooring surface and exerts upward pressure equal to the depth or “head” of water times its density (62.4 lbs./cu. ft.), or approximately 0.47 psi pressure per foot of water. (Yea, right.) Moisture vapor transmission (aka negative hydrostatic

pressure) is nothing compared to true hydrostatic pressure. Hydrostatic pressure can often exert enough physical pressure to lift an entire concrete slab clean out of the ground!

Tip: Relieving Hydrostatic Pressure
If water in your basement has you on the verge of tears, you can make weep holes into the cells of your concrete blocks (4" to 6" in from each mortar-joint) at the point where the floor and wall meet. This will help relieve hydrostatic pressure on your home's foundation. *If you have solid poured concrete walls, don't bother trying to make weep holes. They have no cavities, so weep holes are not required.

Category: Guide to Protecting and Maintaining Flooring

Subcategory: Sealing Tips

Tip: Cleaning a Marble Floor
You have to be careful when cleaning marble floors. They are great-looking, but a little sensitive. Marble floors must be washed only in warm water. No vinegar, please. Save that for more plebeian surfaces, like window glass. The mild acid in vinegar damages marble's delicate surfaces. Wring out all excess moisture from a towel and damp mop. Immediately follow with a dry towel. Remember: marble floors must be dried, as they spot easily.

Tip: Cleaning Grout
There's no doubt, cleaning grout can make you pout. Grout is very porous, which means liquid cleaners seep through it like excrement through a goose. So you need a lot of patience. First, spray a 50/50 solution of hydrogen peroxide and water directly on the spot. Make sure you soak it good. Let it set 15 minutes, and repeat. Note: If you are working with colored grout, ignore the preceding instructions. The peroxide, which is a bleach, will remove the color from colored grout. If you still can't get the stain out, soak a heavy-duty paper towel in peroxide and lay it over the stain. Cover the towel with plastic wrap to prevent the peroxide from drying out quickly. The towel holds the peroxide on the surface giving it time to dissolve the stain. If that doesn't work, mix a paste of straight peroxide and baking soda. Allow the bubbling to subside. Apply to the stain and let it set. Re-spray with peroxide as it dries out. Miscellaneous notes: Shaving cream also does a good job removing stains on grout. If your grout is colored test an inconspicuous spot first. Tile stores now carry a cleaner stick that resembles chalk. It is safe to use on colored grout and works wonders. Finally, once you remove the stains from the grout, seal it.

Tip: Cleaning tile and slate
Like marble, tile and slate should be washed with warm water only. These floor surfaces require a lot of preventive maintenance. To ensure that their beauty and integrity will remain untainted for years to come, adhere to the foloowing guide to protecting and maintaining floors: Apply a quality sealant on a regular basis to slate, tile, and especially the grout. Also, take care to clean up spills immediately to avoid the formation of spots and stains.

Tip: Sealing a Concrete Garage Floor
So, you've read a guide on protecting and maintaining flooring and you're convinced that all of the flooring in your home is safe. But, have you thought about your garage? Sealing your concrete garage floor is a great way to protect it from road salt, eliminate concrete dust, prevent stains, and improve sweepability. And, if you ever decide to paint the floor, you've got a great primer. Follow these easy steps:
1. Use a hose to scrub the floor with commercial concrete cleaner and degreaser according to the manufacturer's instructions.
2. In stained areas, let the cleaner soak in for up to 30 minutes, and repeat the application as needed for stubborn stains.
3. When the floor is dry, put the sealer in a large paint tray. Use a brush to cut in the perimeter and then roll the rest with a medium nap paint roller, equipped with a long handle. Work your way out of the garage. Apply generously but roll out all puddles. Sealer will stain surfaces, so apply it carefully and mask other areas when spraying.
4. Clean up tools with warm soapy water immediately and allow the sealer to dry as directed by the manufacturer. Do not apply a second coat.
*A word of caution: Read product cautions and directions, ventilate the room, and wear appropriate protection such as goggles and a respirator mask.

Tip: Sealing Marble and Granite
Everyday household liquids such as orange juice, nail polish remover, shampoo, and even water can seriously stain certain marbles. Granite, on the other hand, resists stains beautifully. Professional installers recommend the use of neutral pH breathable sealers for both marble and granite, once they have been installed. Depending on how much use or foot traffic that the marble or granite is exposed to, these sealers need to be reapplied on a regular basis. If you choose marble for your entrance foyer, you might have to have it professionally cleaned and resealed every 12 - 18 months. Marble used in bathrooms and kitchens should be cleaned and resealed every 9 - 12 months.

Tip: Sealing Tile and Grout Joints?
There's more than one way to seal a tile. There are two in fact. You can either seal the grout joints or you can seal the tile itself. Which option you choose, depends on the type

of tile you have. Porous materials like marble have to be sealed. Your basic glazed ceramic tile, on the other hand, will only require the grout joints to be sealed. This will make them more water and mildew resistant, and help keep dirt out of the joints. Most manufacturers suggest you wait a couple of weeks before doing this so the grout has a chance to thoroughly set. Here are a few tips to guide you through the sealing process:
• Apply a silicone or water-based grout sealer to the joints. If you're working with glazed tile, you can get a little sealer on the tile surface, but you'll need to wipe it off before it dries.
• If you're installing a porous material like slate, marble or terra cotta, you'll need to seal the surface of the tiles to prevent them from getting stained with use.
• Apply an acrylic top-coat on the tile surface. You'll have to reseal the tile occasionally as it wears off. Don't use any cleaners with ammonia on the tile because it will strip the sealer off.

Category: Guide to Roof Protection and Repair

Subcategory: Roof Coating Tips

Tip: Locating a Roof Leak
When it comes to leaking roofs, many homeowners are looking for leaks in all the wrong places. You no longer have to be one of them. The first and perhaps most obvious place to look for a roof leak is directly above the leak in a ceiling or exterior wall. Use a flashlight to inspect the attic floor over the leak while it's raining. If you see standing water, water stains, mold, wet insulation or other exposed insulation, you've found what you've been looking for.

Tip: Of Roofs and Rainfall
One very obvious source of moisture and/or water in your basement is rainwater. During a hard 2 "- rainfall, a 1,000-square-foot roof will collect about 250 gallons of water, dying to get into you nice dry basement. If you have four downspouts, that averages out to about 63 gallons (240 l) per downspout location. Check your roof thoroughly for leaks and repair them as soon as possible. The longer you let the problem occur, the worse the damage will be.

Category: Guide to Waterproofing Basements

Subcategory: Basement Finishing Tips

Tip: Assessing your yard's grade

It's sad, but true. A lot of yards don't make the grade when it comes to keeping water out of your basement. Improper grading around the house is one of the leading causes of basement leaks. This problem can be corrected, though, be advised that it is usually not a do-it-yourself type project. Anyway, here's what you can do to help the situation.
• See how severe the problem is. Do you see depressions that could be filled easily, or are you looking at a major regrading?
• If small depressions are your only problem, order fill dirt (unless you have some available on your property) and fill them in. You can probably get your fill at a local construction site, local nursery, or landscaping supply house. After the dirt has settled, check back in a few days (preferably after a rain). If you still see depressions, add more fill.
• If your yard requires more extensive work, it's time to consult with an excavation contractor or a landscaper with grading experience. Your job may require the operation of heavy equipment or the installation of foundation drains and other projects beyond the ability of most home owners.
• Discuss options with the contractor. Make sure you discuss the impact of the work on your property, such as tree removal or damage to shrubs and other landscaping. Be aware that this kind of work will probably cause considerable damage; allow room in your budget for seeding, sod and plantings.
• Make a contract with the contractor.

Tip: Controlling Condensation
Need to get rid of condensation? No sweat. The first step is to insulate the water pipes. Also, make sure you keep your basement well-ventilated. Sunlight and free air movement can quickly dry out a basement, except when the weather outside is hot and humid. Keep your windows closed hot, humid weather or long rainy spells. Why? The outside air will most likely contain more moisture than the basement air. If you don't want to open your windows to the summer heat, use air conditioning or dehumidifiers to keep the air cool and dry. Heat the basement during the winter. Follow this simple advice and you'll have a sweat-free basement all year round.

Tip: Correcting an Improper Grade
If your lawn is flat or slopes toward your house, you could be in for a long wet spell and some big-time relandscaping. The trick is to make sure the ground slopes away from the outside foundation (about one inch per foot) for at least ten feet. Seed the land with a good lawn grass. Sodding may be a better idea since it prevents newly graded areas from washing away during heavy rains. If you have large area of land that slope toward the house, you'll need to intercept and redirect surface drainage some distance from the house. You can dig a shallow, half-round drainage ditch or depression which should route the water around the house. Sod the ditch (as they say in Britain) or plant grass in it. *If you don't like the idea of a ditch, sodded or otherwise, you may want to install drainage tiles with one or more catch basins at low spots.

Tip: Keeping Water Away From Your Foundation
Exterior waterproofing barriers can protect your outside wall areas, usually, more or less. But these anti-leaking barriers can't keep out water that accumulates at the footer or floor level. The best thing to do is direct this water away from the foundation or into drainage or pumping systems. To control basement leakage, any guide to basement waterproofing will tell you that you can install a drainage system on the inner side of the foundation. To do this you'll have to first break up the floor is broken up along the perimeter of the basement wall, place drain tile in a trench that carries the water to a discharge point, or sump pump, which takes the water away from the house. If you have hollow block walls, you can drill holes at the bottom to relieve the water pressure and allow the water to pass into the drain pipe. You can fill the trench with gravel and recement or replace the floor. If you install it correctly, this system should take care of your leakage problem. You may also want to put in channels on the basement floor to take the water away through a sump pump.

Tip: Leaky Plumbing
Moisture is moisture, no matter where it comes from. Leaky plumbing or clothes hung out to dry in your basement will, of course, cause unwanted condensation. You can prevent it all easily enough by repairing plumbing promptly, opening windows or drying clothes in an automatic dryer vented outdoors. If these suggestions don't help, try using a large-capacity dehumidifier. Before you invest in the wrong remedy, however, you might want to borrow a dehumidifier from a friend or neighbor. It also wouldn't hurt to invest in a guide to basement waterproofing systems.

Tip: Preventing Puddles
So, you've got puddling, do you, ducky? Have you ever thought of installing gutters and downspouts? If you already have them installed, make sure you clean them out regularly. You wouldn't believe the stuff that collects in there. If you have leaves and twigs from nearby trees collecting in a gutter, install a basket-shaped wire strainer over the downspout outlet or place screening across the length of the gutter. Don't let your gutters and downspouts fall into disrepair. Repair those suckers immediately. To prevent water puddling as it comes down your downspout, use a concrete gutter or splash block to carry the water away at a slope of one inch per foot. Also, you might think of extending your downspouts from rain gutters away from the outside foundation. Finally, you can pipe roof water into an underground storm drain, dry well, or surface outlet, fifteen feet or more from the house.

Tip: Protecting Basement Windows
If your below-grade basement windows are unprotected, you're gonna get soaked every

rainy season. You need to protect them with metal or masonry window wells with gravel at the bottom to provide drainage. *If you want total coverage, you can get yourself clear plastic bubbles that cover the entire window well like an awning.

Tip: The aluminum foil test
If you don't know where that nasty damp smell in your basement is coming from, don't despair. There is a simple test that can tell you whether the water is seeping in from the outside or condensing inside. And, you didn't have to have written the guide to basement waterproofing to perform it. Tape a twelve-inch square of aluminum foil to a wall that tends to get damp on you. Be sure to make all four sides as airtight as possible. Wait a day or two. If the side of the foil against the wall is wet, you got seepage; if the outside is wet, you got condensation.

Category: Tips on Dealing with Mold and Mildew Damage

Subcategory: Mold and Mildew Removal Tips

Tip: Removing mildew from clothing and accessories
Like Swamp Thing and some rock stars, mildew likes damp places where air can't circulate and the sun don't shine. Like your basement, or your closets, which are a prime breeding ground for the fungus. When you notice mildew on clothes or accessories, get rid of it as quickly as possible by following these simple directions:
1. Pour undiluted white distilled vinegar* into a spray bottle. Vinegar has a high success rate for getting rid of mildew, and it also eliminates the bad odor.
2. Spray the vinegar onto the affected area of the garment or accessory.
3. Let the vinegar work its magic for several hours, ideally outside in the sun.
4. If you're dealing with a garment, wash it only after the sight and smell of the fungus is gone. Use warm, sudsy water, and hang the garment to dry in a clean, dry place.
*Liquid chlorine bleach also kills mildew. Check the tags on your garment to find out if it's safe to bleach them. Other acidic substances like lemon juice or grapefruit juice can also combat mildew damage.

Tip: Removing musty smell from a basement

If you think that you have to live with that smell in your basement, think again. You can relegate the damp, dank smell in your basement to the must-bin of history. In most cases, getting rid of the rank stank is fairly simple. Just identify the source and follow the steps to a must-free future.
1. Ventilate. Too much moisture is the cause of musty basements. Opening a couple of windows at opposite ends of the area may give you enough cross-ventilation to blow

away the smell.
2. Throw out any carpet padding infested with mildew and deep-clean your carpets. Air out your furniture in the sun.
3. Mop or wash down concrete floors and walls with a solution of bleach and water (about 3/4 cup chlorine bleach to 1 gal. of water.Leave the solution on the concrete surfaces for 5 minutes, then rinse and dry.
4. Check the drainage around your house. Porous basement walls may transmit moisture from the ground outside during rainy spells, and the trapped moisture increases the humidity in your basement. Make sure the ground slopes away from foundation walls, and that downspouts extend 6 feet or more from the house.
5. Waterproof the basement. Look for cracks in the walls and floor and seal them with hydraulic cement. Apply concrete waterproofing sealer where the floor meets the wall.
6. Buy and install a dehumidifier as a last resort to remove excess moisture.

Category: Tips on Deck Protection and Repair

Subcategory: Deck Repair Tips

Tip: Repairing Decayed Wood
Like everything else, successfully repairing decayed wood can be made easier if you know a few handy hints. For example, epoxy dries very fast and is very hard to remove. So it is wise to clean up as you go along. Here are a few more tips:
• Build up deep holes in layers about 1/2 inch (12 mm) thick. Slightly overfill a flat surface.
• Shape the filler with any tool that seems appropriate on contoured surfaces or corners.
• Rasps are available in a wide variety of shapes for use on flat and contoured surfaces.
• Rasping is not required, but it can be a lot less time-consuming than sanding if you have a lot of hard, dried material to get rid of.
• Drive nails into large damaged areas and let the heads stick up a little so they will be embedded in the filler, but lie below the finished surface.
• You can cut, shape, smooth and drill into cured epoxy just as you can wood.
• Read warning labels and wear goggles, gloves, a dust mask and any other recommended protective equipment while working.

Tip: Repairing Rotted Wood in a Deck
Did you neglect to read up on tips on deck protection and repair? Too late, the damage is done. What now? Water can do a job on a deck that hasn't been properly protected against the elements. Fortunately, you can usually repair this situation by following these ten steps:
1. Remove all wet, loose and unsound wood, using a wood chisel, an electric drill with a spade bit, or other suitable tool.

2. Probe the area around the decay with an awl. If it feels as solid as unaffected areas, drill a lot of closely spaced holes of 1/8-inch (3-mm) diameter in the wood and inject a liquid wood hardener as directed by the manufacturer.
3. Mix two-part epoxy or polyester wood filler as directed. Don't mix more than you can apply and shape in a few minutes. This stuff hardens real fast, and once it does, it's useless.
4. Fill the hole or build up the affected area with the wood filler, using a putty knife or flexible plastic spreader. Press hard to work the initial layer into the surface for a good bond.
5. Clean off the applicator and mixing container immediately.
6. Use a rasp tool to shape or level excess filler as soon as the filler sets up, but before it dries completely.
7. Use medium or coarse sandpaper to further shape and blend the patch when the filler is completely dry. For flat surfaces, use a rubber sanding block or power sander. On contoured surfaces, use wood dowels or other appropriate shapes to back the sandpaper.
8. Blow off the dust and apply freshly mixed filler to any remaining depressions or pinholes, or to build up more material as needed get the shape you want.
9. Use medium, then fine sandpaper, to smooth the patch and feather it into the surrounding wood.
10. Touch up the patched area with primer and paint.

Category: Tips on Waterproof Coatings

Subcategory: Waterproof Coating Tips

Tip: Sheet-Membrane Waterproofing System
Sheet-Membrane Systems—Sheet membranes used in below grade applications are similar to the materials used in roofing applications and include thermoplastics, vulcanized rubbers and rubberized asphalts. *The thickness of these systems varies from 20 to 120 mils.

Category: Tips on Waterproofing

Subcategory: Waterproofing Tips

Tip: Applying Waterproof Coatings
Need some tips on waterproofing? You've come to the right place.Water repellent coatings can be brushed, rolled, or sprayed on, depending on the size of the surface to be treated. For either water- or solvent-based coating, you will definitely need a

paintbrush for painting around the edges (called cutting-in). If you're rolling the coating on, use a synthetic roller cover (use a long-napped one for rough surfaces) and a roller pan. Spraying requires low-pressure (20 psi) spray equipment with a stainless-steel, fan-tip nozzle. You will also need plastic dropcloths to protect adjacent surfaces and landscaping. Be sure to wear eye protection and rubber gloves when applying the product.

Tip: Recipe for Waterproofing Leather

Are you looking for tips on waterproofing leather? There are a number of leather waterproofing products on the market, but if you don't want to spend the money or just feel like experimenting with something new, here's two down-home recipes for waterproofing that you might like to try.

• Recipe one: Heat equal parts neatsfoot oil, paraffin oil and beeswax in a low temperature pot. Heat and stir until emulsified, and let cool. Application: Always apply when warm to leather project. Brush or dab on. Apply sparingly and let stand for 10 minutes before handling. Leather will darken slightly.

• Recipe two: Heat gently equal parts vaseline and paraffin oil and mix thoroughly. Apply above, must be warm. Leather will darken slightly. A slight greasy feeling will be apparent for a few days. *When working in cold temperatures, warm up both the leather project and the above compounds when applying.

Tip: Resealing an Asphalt Driveway

If your asphalt surface is stable and was installed correctly, it will need to be sealed only occasionally. Sealer comes in 5-gallon cans, enough to cover about 250 square feet. You'll find that older, porous drives will soak up more sealer than newer drives. A good sealing will make gray-looking, dried-out asphalt look better while keeping out water that causes erosion and cracking. Many homeowners mistakenly believe that sealing can take the place of resurfacing. It can't. Resurfacing involves topping an old asphalt drive with at least 2 inches of new material. And no coating can rescue a job that consists of a 1- or 2-inch layer of asphalt applied over loose gravel.

Tip: Waterproofing Masonry Surfaces

When the effects of repeated freezing and thawing start cracking up your concrete, brick, and stone it's time to give them a clear water repellent coating. This will decrease water absorption, which leads to cracking, and keep your surfaces looking sharp. You can buy water repellents in both water- and solvent-based formulations. You may need to apply water-based mixes more often, but not to worry. They are less malodorous (smelly) and are safer both for you and the environment. Because they are thin and nonelastic, neither type of coating will seal cracks in the surface. Here are a few tips on waterproofing to help you get the best possible results waterproofing your masonry surfaces:

• Always test a coating on a small, inconspicuous area before beginning work to make sure that you will be happy with the results. Please note that some water repellents are designed to be applied to specific materials only, so read the product label before you buy.
• Don't use heavy-duty commercial coatings because they leave an undesirable glossy finish.

Category: Tips on Waterproofing Concrete

Subcategory: Concrete Sealer Tips

Tip: Cleaning Concrete
Want to improve the looks of your patio, sidewalk or driveway and help protect it from the ravages of weather? You can clean it. Here's some tips on waterproofing concrete:
1. Rent a portable power washer from your local tool rental center or home improvement center. These come in either electric- or gasoline-powered models that use a home garden hose as a water source and use a spray wand like a car wash to deliver a stream of pressurized water.
2. Wet the concrete to be cleaned, and then apply the cleaning product of your choice according to the directions. These products help to strip off grease, oil and dirt;some can actually make the concrete look brighter. If you want a cost-effective cleaner, make your own. Just rustle up a solution of 50% bleach and 50% water.
3. Using a long-handled scrub brush will help get the most out of your cleaning products.
4. Rinse the concrete thoroughly with the power washer. Take care to remove the solution and any loose debris from the concrete completely.
5. Allow the slab to dry thoroughly.

Tip: Sealing Concrete
On of the best tips on waterproofing concrete available is to DO IT. Protecting your concrete surfaces from the ravages of the elements, both natural and unnatural, is not as difficult as you might think. Just follow these simple steps.
1. Calculate the total surface area you will be sealing (you do remember how, don't you?). In case you don't, here's an arithmetic refresher for you: Multiply the length by the width, or vice versa. That will give you the area. Bring these numbers with you to your home improvement center, lumberyard or hardware store when you are ready to buy sealer.
2. Buy concrete sealer premixed in one-gallon or larger containers. It is made to be rolled on with a roller assembly.
3. Apply thin, even coats of the sealer. It is better to put on two lighter coats that will dry evenly than one heavy, blotchy application of concrete coating.

4. Allow the sealer to dry completely before using the treated area.

Category: Water Damage Advice

Subcategory: Water Damage Repair Tips

Tip: Acid damage
Well, assuming this is not a trick question, those unsightly brown stains mean that your block or poured concrete walls have acid damage. (This has nothing to do with their having been poured in the sixties.) In this case, the clay's the thing, (as Shakespeare didn't say.) The clay outside your home is very acidic, so when the water leaks into your basement, the acidity comes along for the ride. Under normal circumstances, your basement wall acts as a filter, holding this acid back and allowing the "clean" water into your basement. Over time, acid damage will cause lower wall deterioration. If you notice signs of your walls being on an acid trip, call a local waterproofing professional for an intervention and treatment.

Tip: Barrierology 101
Keeping water and moisture on its side of the border, so to speak, has been a problem since The Flood. Over the millenia, folks have tried everything and anything to stem the endless tide: thatch, such as straw, reed, leaves and other dried vegetable matter as a barrier against water entering their home. In time, other more sophisticated waterproofing materials were used. These included: animal skins, timber shingles, and natural stones like slate. The architectural designs of the day such as high pitched roofs helped overcome some of the shortfalls and limitations of the materials that were used. Over the centuries other waterproofing materials were used such as metals eg. copper, lead, zinc, and tin. With the discovery of oil, and advances in chemistry more efficient petroleum-derived waterproofing products such as bituminous, butyl rubber, neoprene rubber, hypalon etc.were developed. Of course, technology marches on and it won't be long until today's waterproofing membranes such as polyurethanes, acrylics and polyesters will seem as primitive as leaves and animal skins are today.

Tip: Efflorescence
If you can rule out your two-year old's artwork, chances are that white chalky stuff on your basement wall is known as Efflorescence, which is Latin for "white chalky stuff." Efflorescence is a kind of psoriasis that concrete gets when it is damp for too long. You see, Johnny, concrete is made of lime cement and stone. The white chalky stuff just tells you that the bonding agent that holds your wall together is having a chemical breakdown. If left untreated, the water inside your foundation wall will, over time, leech the lime cement out of the wall, leaving nothing to hold it together, which could lead to

your nervous breakdown. Want some water damage advice before it happens? Prevent it from happening and keep your eyes on those walls!

Tip: Water, water everywhere

Like the proverbial thief in the night, water can get into your foundation in a number of ways. It can sneak in through the cove area where the floor and the wall meet). By using its super power of hydrostatic pressure, water can penetrate through cracks in your floor. Water has many ways to seep and creep into your walls and floors and foundations, most of them are invisible to the human eye. That's why it is always wise to consult a professional to determine how water is getting in.

Tip: Waterproofing possibilities

All things great and small can benefit from waterproofing. Modern technologies make it possible to waterproof all kinds of stuff such as concrete, cement render, fibre cement sheets, gypsum boards, timber, wicker baskets, the entire city of Seattle and the Rain Forest. The world is full of wonderful products available through your home center or professional waterproof contractors that can meet your waterproofing needs.