



Building Success 101

Q: How difficult is it to move a wall to enlarge a room?

A: That depends. If the wall is non-structural (meaning it is not vital to the home's stability), moving it slightly is usually an easy undertaking. However, if moving the wall affects the size or location of a door, window opening or other feature in that room or an adjacent space, the alteration is more difficult, time-consuming, and costly. The movement of a structural wall (one that is vital to the home's stability) is often prohibitively difficult.

Let the Gaming Begin

The concept of a "media room," as a space specifically devoted to home theater and audio systems, is relatively new. Home designers and builders found the idea so appealing to clients that media rooms were quickly incorporated into the floor plans of new homes and renovated homes, all along the price spectrum. Such rooms are designed for comfortable television and movie viewing and are acoustically separated from the rest of the house.

Now, professional homebuilders and their design teams are responding to the evolution of media technology with new "media room" features. These new, sophisticated spaces can incorporate multiple, flat-panel plasma or LCD television screens (called "displays" in the trades) for watching broadcast television, surfing the Internet, and playing video games. Also included -- by client demand -- are surround-sound audio, multi-port outlets and docks. These enable a wide range of consumer electronics, and multipurpose furnishings and built-ins that suit both card and electronic game players.

Yes, the media room has become the game room, again driven by homebuyer demand and a host of new (mostly electronic) toys. Builders are educating their clients about the lifestyle advantages of including such a project and the value it adds to their property.

Consider some of the special features that a true Game Room encompasses, all of which are easily accommodated in a new construction project:

- **Acoustics.** Sound transmission in or out of a game room can be disruptive. Builders incorporate products that block or deaden sound through the walls, floors, and ceilings. Special membranes and laminated drywall and plywood panels meet the need without adding a lot of extra cost, rendering the Game Room almost a separate acoustical zone within the house.
- **Light and shading.** Everyone enjoys natural light ... except when there's a movie playing. Windows are a prime consideration that maintain flexible use of the room when the house is sold. The home's exterior appearance must be considered, as well. To create the optimal movie-watching experience, builders turn to motorized screens and draperies that smoothly draw across the windows. Controlled by remote devices or wall-mounted panels, such screens retract into the wall when not in use or disappear into a subtle housing to retain the room's overall aesthetic design.

- **Multiple displays.** One screen may not be enough in the modern Game Room. Though builders usually leave the purchase of consumer electronics up to the homebuyers after the house is finished, high-tech game rooms must be designed and wired to accommodate several displays and multiple signals. These may include satellite, wireless and wired Internet, cable, personal computers, and (don't forget!) electricity.
- **Seating, storage, and snacks.** Like its media room predecessor, the new Game Room is a gathering place for family and guests, often engaged in multiple activities at the same time. Space for several zones of comfortable seating is very popular, as is built-in cabinet storage for all of the game players, audio and video equipment, and other components. Small kitchen set-ups, complete with sink, under-counter appliances, and counter work space, provide family and guests with additional convenience in this self-contained haven.

Media rooms are among the new wave of distinct, specialized areas within today's new homes. The "Game Room" reflects the development of high-tech consumer electronics and the consumers' desire to maximize enjoyment of these new toys. As a homebuilding professional, we are equipped to suggest ways to create space for a Game Room and to deliver an amenity that satisfies every goal.

Warm regards,

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