



Building Success 101

Q: What is R-value?

A: R-value is a measure of energy efficiency. The higher the R-value of the insulation, windows, and even a home's structure, the better the house is able to block the transfer of unwanted hot or cold air through walls and ceiling. Residents of homes with high R-value experience far less variation in temperature-and enjoy lower energy bills-by not having to run a furnace or air conditioner continuously to keep the house comfortable.

Learning the Language of Building

If you spend any time on a construction site, you're likely to hear words that sound like a foreign language. Worse yet, you may hear words that you thought you knew but which clearly have some specialized meaning to the people around you.

Don't worry! You aren't really on some other planet. Like any profession, the home building community has a language all its own. Because we believe effective communication is a critical element in meeting our clients' expectations, we make it a priority to help clients understand the building process. This includes some familiarity with the language of building. Here are several common building terms that, when understood, can help us communicate effectively.

- **Cycle time** is the number of days between the first day on the job site and a home's completion. We work with our materials suppliers and subcontractors to determine a reliable cycle time so that our clients can move into their new home on time, as promised. Controlling cycle time also enables us to provide accurate estimates and helps us stay within budget.
- **"Rough-in"**: The **"rough"** stage of construction is the behind-the-wall structural and mechanical work, the parts you don't see when the building is complete. That includes work such as framing the walls, pulling the wiring through the studs, and installing pipes and heating ducts. During this point of the construction process, we can **"rough-in"** a system or product that provides an upgraded or extra service, such as wiring for a high-speed Internet or digital cable network. Installing a system's "backbone" during the rough-in stage of construction costs significantly less than installing it once the house is finished.
- **Staging**: To help reduce costs, we **stage** or organize and schedule the delivery of materials as we need them, rather than receiving a huge load all at once. Staging may also refer to the way we place loads of materials on the job site to make them more accessible to various workers. Both practices help us reduce waste and theft, save time, and keep better track of costs -- all of which keeps budget and cycle time on track.

- **Per-square-foot basis:** Estimating costs on a **per-square-foot basis** is a quick and efficient way to determine a preliminary budget. We make per-foot cost estimates by combining standard industry formulas with our experience of the costs of supplies and labor in our particular geographic location. Such estimates provide a starting point from which we can start to formulate a more accurate and reliable budget based on individual clients' needs, tastes, and finances.
- **Tape and texture:** To create a finished wall, our drywall contractor applies **tape and texture** to hide nail or screw heads and conceal the joints between panels of drywall or gypsum wallboard. The contractor uses a mud-like compound to fill and cover the nail heads and secure a fibrous tape that bridges the joints between adjacent drywall panels. The mud is allowed to dry and is then sanded smooth before applying paint, wallpaper, or other finishes. A quality tape and texture job ensures that cracks or nail heads won't show through finished surfaces.

And this is just a sampling of common terminology used on a building site! We'll be back with more vocabulary in our next edition.

Warm regards,

Richard

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