

## Be cautious on negative grade

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Negative grade means the land around the house is higher than the foundation in one or more sides. This caused surface and shallow ground water flow toward the foundation, which even drainage and moisture barrier to be well addressed but always had water intrusion in a certain time. In terms of our hilly area this is almost inevitable. Therefore we have to be very cautious to inspect this kind of residence.



This scenario happened on my inspection for a client from Poland several months ago. This was a 17 years old over 3,000 sf 2-story detached house with finished basement. It was designed and built by German delicate workmanship. At the first glance, I found the negative grade from the neighbour side. The rust on the basement window cover is the sign of drainage problem. When I inspected the basement, there was standing water along the exterior wall. The seller happened to pick up stuff and asked me what was going on at that moment. I told her there was water intrusion in the basement. She was surprised and said she spilt water this morning. Well, it was not unusual that the home owner did not really know the condition of the property but trying to hide something was different. To be responsible for the seller and buyer I double checked leaking sign which the water crept along and intermittently at the wall footing. Also the stain appeared various times of intrusion on the floor from wall to inside, which verified my judgement. The culprit should be the negative grade, plus the failed moisture barrier and cracks on the concrete foundation which the last 2 were quite common on every building. But once the grade can drain the water away, those should not be too much worry. In addition, the perimeter drain could have trouble too but few chances on this age building.

Once this kind of issues was popped up, the extensive repair and big cost were on the way. Therefore, this section is always critical in our inspection.