Pathways in Architecture & Interior Design

An integrated guide to the disciplines of Architecture and Interior Design: core definitions, essential skills, academic pathways across IB, American High School, and A-Levels / IGCSE, and trusted resources to support aspiring professionals. This deck clarifies expectations, highlights recommended grades and qualifications, and provides practical next steps for portfolio and skill development.

What Is Architecture?

Architecture is the professional discipline of planning, designing, and constructing buildings and large-scale structures. It balances art and engineering to deliver spaces that are visually striking, safe, functional, and sustainable. Architects translate client needs, site constraints, regulatory codes, and environmental strategies into cohesive built outcomes that serve communities over decades.

Core Skills for an Architecture Candidate

Spatial Reasoning & Drawing

Strong ability to visualize 3D spaces from 2D plans; hand-sketching and conceptual drawing remain key for early-stage design and portfolios.

Digital Modeling & CAD

Proficiency in Revit, Rhino, and BIM workflows is essential for design development, coordination, and documentation at the professional level.

Technical & Structural Knowledge

Understanding structural systems, materials behavior, and building codes ensures designs are buildable, safe, and code-compliant.

Academic Pathways — Architecture (Overview)

Admission to architecture programs commonly requires a mix of technical and creative preparation. Below are recommended subject combinations and target grades for competitive programs at IB, American AP, and A-Level/IGCSE tracks. These examples reflect typical expectations for students aiming for top architecture schools.

1

IB Diploma

Required subjects commonly include Math AA (HL) and Physics (HL). Visual Arts (HL) strengthens portfolio prospects. Aim for a total of 36–38+ points with strong HL scores (6s or 7s).

2

American (High School)

Key courses: AP Calculus BC and AP Physics C. AP 2-D Art and Design supports portfolio development. Competitive applicants typically present an unweighted GPA of 3.7+ and AP scores of 4–5.

3

IGCSE (& A-Levels)

Essential A-Levels: Mathematics and Physics; Art & Design is strongly recommended. Target grades: A*AA to AAA, with IGCSE Math/English at Grade 7 (A) or higher.

What Is Interior Design?

Interior Design is the art and science of enhancing indoor environments for health, aesthetics, and usability. It concentrates on volume, lighting, color theory, material selection, furniture, and the human experience within spaces. Interior designers solve human-centered problems—optimizing circulation, ergonomics, acoustics, and lighting to improve daily life and wellbeing.

Core Skills for an Interior Design Candidate

Entry Skills

Attention to detail, color and texture sensibility, strong communication and client empathy, and basic drawing or digital sketching ability.

Skills Gained at Degree Level

Space planning, lighting design, materials & textile knowledge, furniture selection, and physical UX principles for human comfort and accessibility.

Academic Pathways — Interior Design (Overview)

IB Diploma

Relevant subjects include Visual Arts (HL) and Design Technology (HL); Math (AI or AA) at SL is usually sufficient. Competitive candidates often achieve a total of 30–34 points with a 5 or 6 in Art/Design.

American High School

AP 2-D Art and Design and AP Psychology are recommended. Target an unweighted GPA of 3.3+, with a strong creative portfolio being decisive for admissions.

IGCSE & A-Levels

A-Level Art & Design or Design & Technology are appropriate; minimum IGCSEs include Math/English at Grade 4 (C). Favorable A-Level bands typically fall in the ABB to BBB range.

Portfolio & Practical Preparation

Build a curated portfolio that demonstrates process: concept sketches, iterative studies, technical drawings, material experiments, and high-quality photography of physical models. Include a short project statement for each piece explaining the problem, your approach, and the outcome. Supplement portfolios with basic software skills (Revit, Rhino, SketchUp) and small built or fabricated projects when possible.

Trusted Resources (make sure to check these out)

The following professional resources are essential for learning, inspiration, and career planning. They provide education guidelines, current projects, tools for portfolio development, and community networks that support both students and emerging professionals.

- **RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects)** — The global standard for architectural education and professional milestones.
- **ArchDaily** — The world's most visited architecture website for project inspiration and industry news.
- **Center for Architecture - Student Resources** — Free design activities and guides for budding architects.
- **ASID (American Society of Interior Designers)** — Research, standards, and career tracking for interior designers.
- **Houzz University** — Practical guides comparing interior design vs. architecture and industry trends.
- **Interior Design Magazine** — Key resource for projects, materials, and professional practice updates.

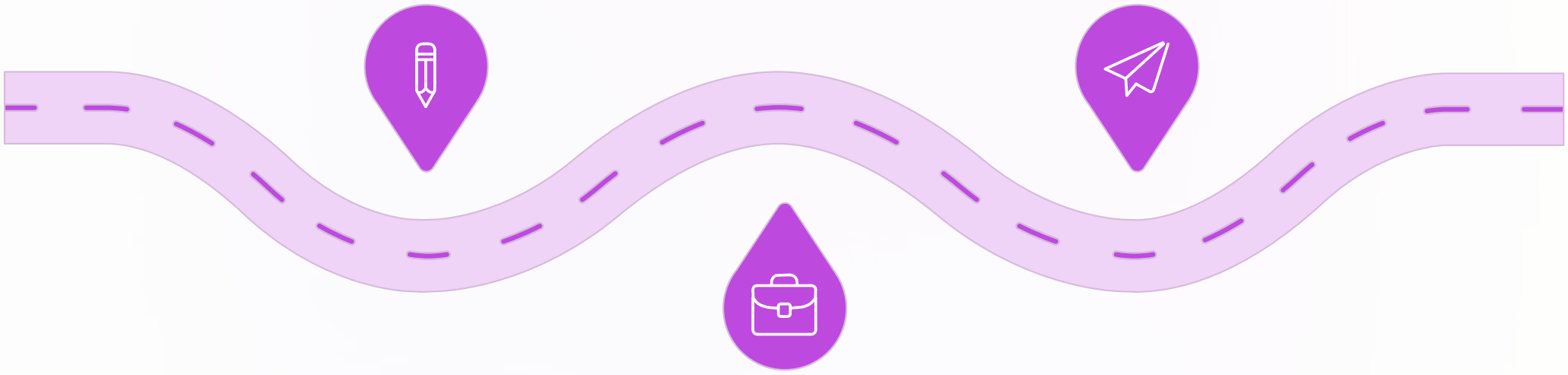
Next Steps & Action Plan

Develop Skills

Practice sketching, math, and software weekly

Apply Strategically

Tailor statements and secure references



Curate Portfolio

Build 3–5 projects showing iteration

Start by assessing gaps: take targeted courses (AP/HL subjects) and practice sketching weekly. Create 3–5 polished portfolio projects that show iteration and problem-solving. Finally, prepare tailored applications: concise project statements, strong references, and evidence of both technical competence and creative thinking. Aim to refine one portfolio piece each month and seek reviews from professionals or teachers.