

MODULE 2 CHEAT SHEET

The 12 Elements of Architecture - definitions, concepts, and vocabulary at a glance.

THE 12 ELEMENTS

Space

The void between physical elements, where life actually happens.

Form

The visible shape and configuration that gives a building its identity.

Proportion

The relationship between parts and the whole, guided by ratios and visual harmony.

Scale

How the size of architectural elements relates to the human body.

Light and Shadow

The interplay that reveals form, creates mood, and defines atmosphere.

Texture and Materiality

The tangible surface qualities that connect people physically and emotionally to a space.

Rhythm and Repetition

The organized repetition of elements that creates movement and order.

Symmetry and Asymmetry

The balance between mirroring and dynamism in a composition.

Context and Site

The surroundings, landscape, and climate that a building must respond to.

Structure and Tectonics

The load-bearing systems and the art of expressing how things are put together.

Transitions

The thoughtful way materials, surfaces, and spatial experiences meet and shift.

Color

The visual property of surfaces that shapes mood, spatial character, and atmosphere.

TYPES OF FORM

Rectilinear

Straight lines and right angles - orderly, stable, rational

Curvilinear

Curves, arcs, and circular geometries - movement and fluidity

Organic

Irregular, nature-inspired shapes that feel grown rather than built

Geometric

Pure mathematical shapes - spheres, pyramids, cones

Hybrid

Combines multiple form types in a unified composition

TYPES OF RHYTHM

Regular

Identical elements at equal intervals - steady and predictable

Alternating

Cycling between two or more different elements

Progressive

Gradual change across a sequence - creates direction

Random

Irregular spacing - energetic but risks chaos

Pattern / Modular

2D field repetition - tilework, screen walls, facade panels

PROPORTION SYSTEMS

Golden Ratio (1:1.618)

The most widely recognized proportioning system, found throughout nature and classical architecture.

Classical Orders

Doric, Ionic, Corinthian - each with distinct proportional rules for columns, entablatures, and spacing.

Le Corbusier's Modulor

A proportioning system based on human body dimensions and the golden ratio

Tatami Mat Module

Japanese spatial unit (roughly 90x180cm) - a human-scaled module that governs room sizes

UNIVERSAL DESIGN QUICK REFERENCE

Doorways: 36" min. Hallways: 42-48" wide. Lever handles over knobs. Flush thresholds. Switches at 42-44". Outlets at 18-24". At least one zero-step entrance. Main floor half-bath accessible.

KEY TAKEAWAY

These 12 elements are the vocabulary of architecture. They are not isolated ideas - they work together in every building you see. The elements you gravitate toward will shape your design voice. Understanding all of them gives you the ability to create spaces that are structurally sound, functionally excellent, and emotionally resonant.