



# SO YOU WANT TO BE AN ARCHITECT?

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## What is an Architect?

An architect is someone who is specifically trained and licensed to work on the design, planning, and construction of the buildings in which people live, work, play, and learn.

The role of an architect is varied. It involves bringing together the creative ideas and visions of the client, consideration of the users needs, and the coordination of all trades involved in the performance of the building. These professionals lead the process in creating functional spaces, from concept and design, through documentation, and field observation during construction. At all times, an architect's number one priority is public safety and health. Their role is important in every stage of the process as they are the link between all parties involved with a building being built.

A career in architecture requires specific skills. Those include design, engineering, management, supervising, and communication. Architects frequently present their ideas to the community, their clients, contractors, and others. Beneficial soft skills include time management, organization, versatility, and client relations. Successful architects have a thorough knowledge of construction, which they gain through years of practice.

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## Three steps to becoming an architect: education, experience, and examination

All states require individuals to be licensed (registered) before they can call themselves an architect. Once licensed, they can be contracted to provide architectural services. There are three components to licensure: education, experience and examination.

Architects must hold a professional degree in architecture from one of the 120 schools of architecture that have degree programs accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB). Most programs are master's degree level and take five to six years to complete.

Licensure candidates must also gain experience under the supervision of a practicing architect who takes legal responsibility for all work. Once you graduate high school, you can start earning real-world

experience through the Architectural Experience Program (AXP) which is a comprehensive training program created to ensure you gain the knowledge and skills required for the independent practice of architecture.

By passing the Architectural Registration Examination (ARE), you'll demonstrate proficiency in the skills needed to practice architecture. The ARE is broken into six divisions organized around the progression of a typical architecture project.

After receiving a license, all architects must complete a required amount of continuing education throughout their career in order to maintain their license. The number of hours a year depends on the state in which you are licensed.

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## How do I prepare in high school to be an architect?

While in high school, plan a strong college preparatory program of courses. English, history, and other humanities subjects such as social studies, psychology, theater, and communications/public speaking, sharpen your communication skills. Courses in science, mathematics, and physics, will help develop problem-solving techniques.

Art courses — drawing, painting, sculpture, or photography — will be helpful in developing your ability to visualize, conceptualize and think creatively. Drafting by hand is less important as the industry predominantly works with computer programs now.

If you have access to them, courses in computers, 3D modeling, and business will be extremely helpful in preparing for a career in architecture.

Develop and strengthen soft skills. Learn to manage your time and get your projects done well and promptly. Project management is a huge responsibility for an architect.

A well-rounded education is essential because an architect takes on many roles daily. All of the courses you take can relate back to architecture one way or another. The practice of architecture incorporates lessons from all areas of STEM education.

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## Check out these websites for more information

AIA Kansas City: [www.aiakc.org](http://www.aiakc.org)

American Institute of Architecture Students: [www.aias.org](http://www.aias.org)

Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture:  
[www.acsa-arch.org](http://www.acsa-arch.org)

<http://architecture.about.com/cs/careers/a/bearchitect.htm>

[www.ARCHCareersGuide.com](http://www.ARCHCareersGuide.com)

National Council of Architectural Registration Boards:  
[www.ncarb.org](http://www.ncarb.org)

## Begin your career exploration by considering these ideas:

### Discover architecture.

It is diverse and has many opportunities for specialization—become familiar with the options.

### Be interested.

In the design of the built environment, including public space, and how people use it. Volunteer for organizations such as Habitat for Humanity.

### Ask questions.

Most big cities have a local AIA Chapter (American Institute of Architects). They are a great resource and are happy to help you learn more about architecture and give you information about careers. Talk with architects; observe buildings and construction sites; visit architecture firms, schools and speak with architecture students.

### Prepare for professional education.

Develop a broad interest in the arts and humanities and a solid background in the physical sciences and math. Consider taking Advanced Placement courses while in high school to prepare for rigorous college course work.

### Learn communication skills.

Writing effectively, speaking clearly, and developing freehand drawing skills are essential to pursuing a career in architecture.

### Read.

Books and magazines on architecture and design, and browse the web for architecture design websites and blogs.