



SO YOU WANT TO BE AN ARCHITECT?

What is an Architect?

An architect is someone who loves to design and is specifically trained and licensed to work on the planning and design of 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 and keeping in mind the needs of those who will be using the new space. These are professionals who lead the process of creating functional spaces, from concept and design to overseeing the construction of those designs. An architect is not just involved in the design of a building. As licensed professionals, they are also responsible for public safety and overseeing of projects. Their role is important in every stage of the building's construction, from the initial concept to the opening ceremony when the building is complete.

Their responsibilities require specific skills – designing, engineering, managing, supervising and communicating with clients and builders. Architects spend a great deal of time explaining their ideas to clients, construction contractors and others. Successful architects must have a thorough knowledge of the construct of a building, and be able to design and communicate their unique vision effectively.

Three steps to becoming an architect: education, internship and examination

Architects must hold a professional degree in architecture from one of the 117 schools of architecture that have degree programs accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB). Most programs are now a Master's Degree and take 5-6 years.

All states require individuals to be licensed (registered) before they may call themselves an architect and contract to provide architectural services. During the time between graduation and becoming licensed, architecture school graduates go through the Intern Development Program (IDP), which is a comprehensive training program created to ensure that interns in the architecture profession gain the knowledge and skill required for the independent practice of architecture. Graduates work in an architecture firm under the supervision of a licensed architect who takes legal responsibility for all work. After they complete the IDP process, they

must take and pass the Architect Registration Exam (ARE). The exam is broken into seven divisions consisting of multiple choice and graphical questions.

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 they are licensed.

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

While still in high school, you should plan a strong college preparatory program of courses in English, history, and other humanities subjects such as social studies, psychology, theater and communications/public speaking, which will sharpen your communication skills and your ability to put things into context. Courses in science, mathematics, including geometry, trigonometry, algebra, pre-calculus 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, which are important skills to an architect. Drafting is less important than being able to communicate ideas through visuals.

Courses in computers, 3D modeling and business will be extremely helpful in preparing for a career in architecture.

Develop positive skills to use your entire life. Learn how to manage your time and get your projects done well and promptly. Project management is a huge responsibility in the architect's office.

A well-rounded education is essential for success as an architect, and it is just another emphasis that every course is important.

Check out these websites for more information

AIA Kansas City:
www.aiakc.org/students/so-you-want-to-be-an-architect

American Institute of Architects:
www.aia.org/careerstages/student/

American Institute of Architects Students:
www.aia.org

Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture:
www.acsa-arch.org

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

National Council of Architectural Registration Boards:
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.

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.