

# The University of Maryland

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## School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation

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### Sketchbooks

Like musicians who practice their instruments for several hours each day or athletes who practice their sport for hours each day, as architects we must practice drawing on a regular basis. Architects rely heavily on graphics and visual communication to express their ideas. Drawing in a sketchbook is a good way to practice those communication skills.

#### EQUIPMENT

The Sketchbook:

Some general considerations when selecting a notebook are durability, portability, utility and visibility. In other words, your sketchbook should last a long time, be easy to carry and use and allow your drawings to be easily seen. Sketchbooks come in a variety of sizes, so choose one that is easy to hold in various situations.

Pens and Pencils:

Ink is the preferable media for notebooks because of its permanence and high visibility. The pencil has the advantage of being able to produce a wide range of values from light to dark, but is not as permanent as ink and may smudge. However, if you use pencil, do not rely on the eraser. It is better to start the drawing over than to attempt to correct the original drawing.

#### NOTEBOOK ENTRIES

There is no need to start a new page for each new idea. You will find you are quickly filling up your sketchbook with half-used pages. Instead, draw a line across the page at the end of each thought on the page. Further analysis can be gleaned from observing the relationships between these different ideas. Drawing these lines in advance may also force you to be more compact and economical with your drawings. Labeling each drawing with a date and location will help your recall at a later date.

#### FIELD SKETCHES

Lack of time to draw is often an issue when you go out into the field to sketch. One way to deal with this is to make a rough sketch of the general forms and take notes on the details to recreate them at a later time. You may also want to make a rough drawing in pencil that you can later go over in pen. Graph paper may be used to assist you in accurately portraying proportions and rhythms.

#### LINE DRAWINGS, VALUES AND TONES

Line drawings set up the basic structure on which all the rest of the detail information will be placed so take your time in constructing these drawings. Values and tones help increase the representational quality of the drawing. The simplest technique for creating tones is to use evenly spaced parallel lines, or hatch, in which the value is controlled by the spacing of the lines. For vertical surfaces use diagonal lines and for horizontal surfaces use horizontal lines.

#### ELEVATION DRAWINGS

Carefully observe the dimensions of the facade so you can accurately represent the overall proportions of the building. Next, look for major subdivisions in the facade that create subzones, and finally place windows and other openings or features within the subzones.

#### PLAN DRAWINGS

In plan drawings it is important to identify those things which are being cut through and those that are beyond the cut. Plan diagrams are a quick way to describe the conceptual order of the environment, as well as describe scale and the relationship between parts.

#### ANALYTICAL DRAWINGS

Analytical drawings are different than representational drawings in that they are intentionally abstract in order to focus on specific elements. These drawings may focus on things such as geometry, zoning, contrasts, rhythms, and proportions.

These are just some of the types of drawings that could go into a sketchbook. Three dimensional drawings, either in perspective or axon are another good way to capture the ideas of the environment you are studying.

Source: Crowe, Norman, and Paul Laseau. [Visual Notes for Architects and Designers](#). New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1984.

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