

What is Visual Hierarchy in Architecture?

Worksheet

Visual hierarchy is a design principle where elements are arranged so the most important one (a dominant mass, entrance, or dome) reads first, followed by secondary and tertiary elements, guiding perception and wayfinding.

Questions

1. What does visual hierarchy do in a building design?
 - A) Reduces construction cost
 - B) Orders elements by importance to guide perception
 - C) Ensures structural stability
 - D) Increases the number of rooms
2. Which is typically the primary element in a symmetrical civic building?
 - A) A side window
 - B) The central dome or entrance
 - C) A drainpipe
 - D) A perimeter fence
3. Which tool is NOT commonly used to establish hierarchy?
 - A) Scale
 - B) Position
 - C) Contrast
 - D) Paint drying time
4. What is a sign of poor visual hierarchy?
 - A) A clear dominant entrance
 - B) Every element competing equally for attention
 - C) Symmetrical wings
 - D) A central staircase
5. How does a state capitol building establish visual hierarchy?
6. How does a house facade show hierarchy at the entrance?
7. How does a museum lobby use hierarchy to orient visitors?
8. Define: What is visual hierarchy in architecture?
9. Define: What is usually the primary element in a building's hierarchy?
10. Define: Name three tools used to create hierarchy.

Answer Key

1. B) Orders elements by importance to guide perception - Hierarchy organizes elements so the eye naturally moves from the most to least important feature.
2. B) The central dome or entrance - The central dome or main entrance is usually designed as the dominant, primary element.
3. D) Paint drying time - Scale, position, and contrast are hierarchy tools; paint drying time is a construction detail, not a design tool.
4. B) Every element competing equally for attention - Without hierarchy, no element stands out, making the design feel flat and disorganized.
5. A tall central dome dominates the composition (primary) Two symmetrical lower wings flank the dome (secondary) Columns and window trim add detail without competing with the dome (tertiary)
6. A tall gable roof sits above the front door (primary) Lower flanking wings sit on either side (secondary) Window shutters and trim add detail (tertiary)
7. A grand central staircase is the dominant visual anchor (primary) Side galleries are visible but recessed (secondary) Signage and lighting fixtures add wayfinding detail (tertiary)
8. The deliberate ordering of elements by importance so the eye moves from primary to secondary to tertiary features.
9. The main entrance or the dominant mass, such as a central dome or tower.
10. Scale, position (centrality), and contrast.

Bounlu

All cards, step-by-step solutions and an AI tutor are in the Notek app.
Promy turns exam dates into automatic reminders.