

What Is Proportion and Scale in Architecture?

Worksheet

Proportion is the mathematical relationship between a building's parts and its whole; scale is how that size compares to the human body or context, ranging from intimate human scale to grand monumental scale.

Questions

1. Proportion in architecture refers to...

- A) The cost per square meter
- B) The relationship between a building's parts and its whole
- C) The number of floors
- D) The building's construction date

2. The Golden Ratio is approximately...

- A) 1:1
- B) 1:1.618
- C) 1:2
- D) 1:3.14

3. A cathedral's soaring nave is an example of...

- A) human scale
- B) monumental scale
- C) no scale
- D) negative scale

4. Scale in architecture primarily relates a building to...

- A) the human body or its surroundings
- B) the price of materials
- C) the architect's signature
- D) the building's color palette

5. How does the Parthenon use proportion based on the Golden Ratio?

6. Why does a Gothic cathedral feel monumental in scale?

7. How does a traditional cottage use human scale?

8. Define: What is proportion in architecture?

9. Define: What is scale in architecture?

10. Define: What is the Golden Ratio?

Answer Key

1. B) The relationship between a building's parts and its whole - Proportion is about how parts relate to the whole, not cost or floor count.
2. B) 1:1.618 - The Golden Ratio is roughly 1:1.618.
3. B) monumental scale - Oversized proportions relative to the human body create monumental scale.
4. A) the human body or its surroundings - Scale compares building size to the human body or context.
5. The building's width-to-height relationship approximates 1:1.618 Column spacing and the facade's rectangle subdivisions repeat the same ratio This creates a sense of natural, pleasing harmony across the whole facade
Result: a proportion system that feels balanced at every scale of viewing
6. Doorways and naves are built far larger than the human body requires Vertical proportions stretch upward, dwarfing visitors This exaggerated scale communicates awe and spiritual power Result: monumental scale that overwhelms the individual
7. Door heights and window sills are set close to average body dimensions Room proportions keep ceiling heights modest, around 2.4-2.7 m Furniture and thresholds feel immediately comfortable to inhabit Result: an intimate, human-scaled dwelling
8. The relationship between the dimensions of a building's parts and the whole.
9. How a building's size relates to the human body or its surroundings.
10. A proportion of about 1:1.618 often used to create visually pleasing relationships.

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