

Circulation, Clients, and Guest Spaces vs. Family Spaces

THE BIG QUESTIONS

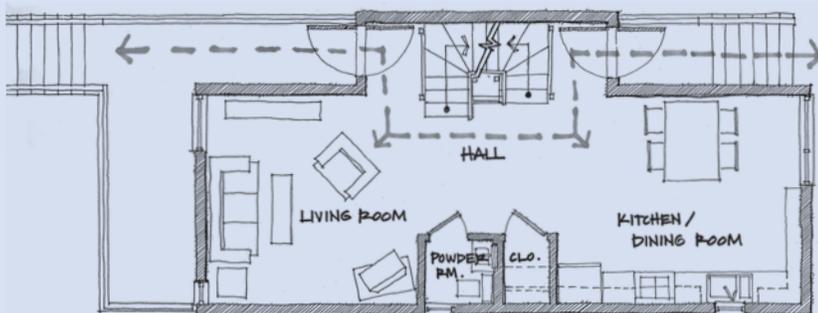
1 How do people move through the spaces in a home?

2 How do architects arrange the rooms in a home to best fit the needs of the client?

Architects make decisions about the arrangement of all the rooms in relation to the path through the house. Consider the arrangement of rooms in your home: Do you have to walk through one room to get to another? If you were to walk from the front door of your home to your bedroom, how many different spaces would you pass through? Do all the spaces flow freely into one another? Are the rooms organized around a hallway? If you were to walk from the front door of your home to the back door, how many different rooms would you walk through? This **circulation path**, designed by the architect, can depend on the shape of the lot and the overall arrangement of the home, as well as on the needs of the client.

When architects design any building, they must consider who is going to use it. If the architects know specific information about the people who will live in a home, they can design it to best suit the needs of those people. The **client** is the person who hires the architect and often lives in the building. If you closely study a floor plan, you can find clues about the specific family or type of families for whom the home was originally designed.

Families lived a much more formal lifestyle 100+ years ago. Throughout most of the 18th century, 19th century, and the first half of the 20th century, American homes typically had a **closed floor plan**. Each individual room had one function and doors that separated it from the other rooms. Today, many newer homes like the F10 House designed by EHDD Architecture have an **open floor plan** with few or no doors between spaces.



F10 House – circulation path through the first floor plan



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F10 House interior – view looking west toward the living room and the front door

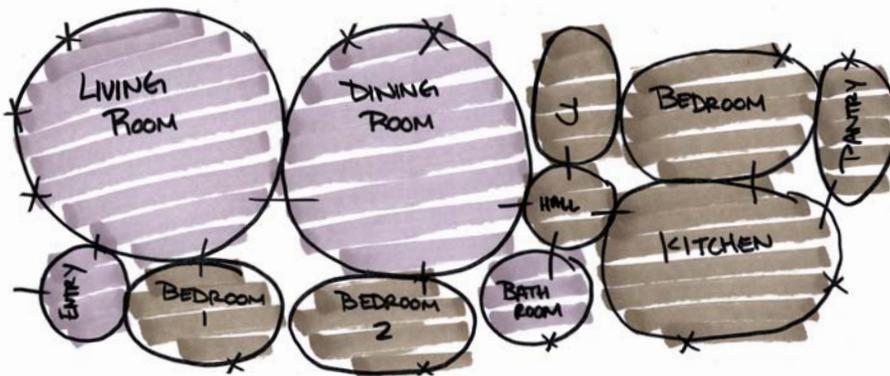
Floor plans in apartment buildings are often more complicated because several households (each with their own family members and their own guests) live under the same roof. Apartments have three types of walls – **interior partition walls** that separate rooms from one another, **exterior walls** that separate rooms from the outside, and **common walls or party walls** that separate one apartment from another.

While family members can freely move through all the rooms in their home (**family spaces**), some rooms are specifically designed to also be used by guests (**guest spaces**). Imagine for a moment that the principal of your

school came to your home. Are there rooms where they would not be “allowed” or welcomed? Which rooms would they never be invited into? This situation helps illustrate how different rooms are arranged and also used by different people.

When a guest comes to your home, your family will probably lead them to a room where you can comfortably visit. Often, this is the living room or perhaps the dining room. Bedrooms and bathrooms aren’t usually designed near the front door of the home because these spaces are more private. In a two-story home, the bedrooms are almost always located on the second floor.

Today we may use our homes differently than they were originally designed, and we may use one room for several different purposes. One hundred years ago, for example, it would have been completely unheard of to eat in the living room. Today however, many families relax and eat on the couch in front of the TV in the living room. Your family’s computer might be located in the dining room or your bedroom might also be the place where you study.



A student's home – bubble diagram of guest spaces (grey) and family spaces (brown)

CHAPTER VOCABULARY

circulation path the path that a person travels when walking through spaces in a building

client the person or company that pays the architect to design the building; often the client lives in the building or is the primary user, but not always

closed floor plan a floor plan where four walls enclose each space; the rooms are linked by doors and are designed to have distinct uses; the second floor of the F10 House has a closed floor plan

open floor plan a floor plan without walls to fully enclose the spaces; the first floor of the F10 House has an open floor plan

interior partition wall a wall within a home that separates rooms from one another

exterior wall a wall that separates rooms from the outside

common wall / party wall a wall shared by two adjacent but separate buildings or apartments; the F10 House is a free-standing building, so it has no common walls

family space a space or room in a home, such as a bedroom, typically used only by family members

guest space a space or room in a home, such as the living room, typically used by both family members and guests; it may also include a hallway leading to the door of an individual apartment

Robie House, 1906 Prairie Style home designed by Frank Lloyd Wright; located in the Chicago neighborhood of Hyde Park

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Prairie Style a style of buildings, furniture, and glass (from approximately 1900–1920); Prairie Style designs used horizontal lines to mimic the flat Midwestern landscape

Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959) an American architect who began his architectural career in Chicago where he did much of his most famous work; he is well-known for his Prairie Style homes built here

Kitchens also illustrate how families and rooms have changed over time. Meal preparation was much more labor intensive 100 years ago. Families and architects felt compelled to hide these spaces away behind closed doors. In 1906, it would have been unthinkable to have guests in your kitchen while

you chatted with them and stirred dinner on the stove. Today however, kitchens are rooms where families and their friends cook together and relax. The F10 House is a good example of this, as there aren't any interior walls to separate the kitchen from the rest of the home.



A 1910 kitchen in Park Ridge, Illinois



F10 House interior – view looking east toward the kitchen / dining room and the back door

© Doug Snower Photography

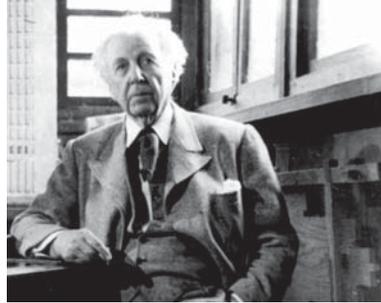
on your way home TODAY

The size of an individual window in a room often provides a good clue about the function of that room. On your way home today, look carefully

at the exterior of homes you pass by and see if you can guess the function of a room just by looking at the size of its window. A larger window will typically be

found in more 'public' (guest) spaces within the home, while smaller windows are often used in more 'private' (family) spaces.

Chapter 11 compares the floor plan of the F10 House with the floor plan of the **Robie House** designed in 1906. The floor plan of this **Prairie Style** home shows that architect **Frank Lloyd Wright** was ahead of his time. He anticipated that families would use rooms in less formal ways and that guest spaces and family spaces would be separated in different ways.



Frank Lloyd Wright



Robie House



© Hedrich Blessing.

Robie House – view looking toward the living room from the dining room (during the home's restoration, the furniture was removed)

DID YOU know?

Tea and guests in the parlor



Colonial-era families in early America (1600s–1700s) did not have the luxury of building homes with rooms designed for only one purpose. “Hall and parlor” homes had rooms that were multi-functional, just as are the rooms in many new homes designed today. These two-room homes typically were 18 feet wide and 36 feet long, and they had a fireplace at each end of the structure. The hall was typically the larger and more informal space and was used as the kitchen, dining, and work room. The parlor served as the formal room where the guests were received and where the family slept. (Toilet facilities were located in the outhouse!)

in class

Mr. Robie with the open floor plan in the red brick home

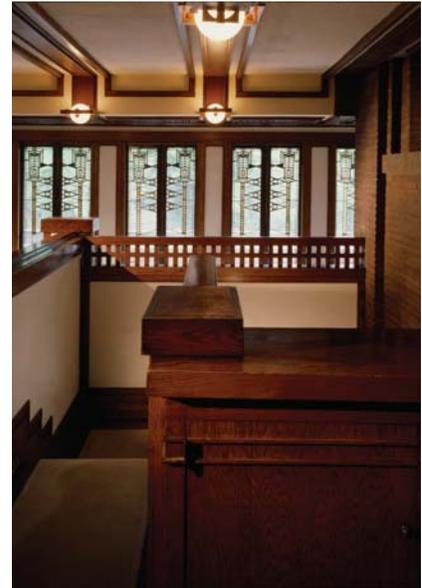
The playing cards provide the clues: you figure out how the clients match up with their homes. Team up with several classmates and test your knowledge of reading floor plans in the 10 comparison buildings. See if you can figure out which home was designed for which client. Your teacher has the complete instructions and playing cards for this in-class activity.

Although the kitchen in the Robie House is still separate from the other rooms, the living room and dining room can both be seen at the same time. The two rooms are visually tied together with a continuous strip of windows along one wall.

A fireplace and open stairwell are the only divisions between the living room and the dining room. This arrangement was very different than most of the other homes designed in America at the beginning of the 20th century.



Robie House – view of the living room and fireplace (during the home's restoration, the furniture was removed)

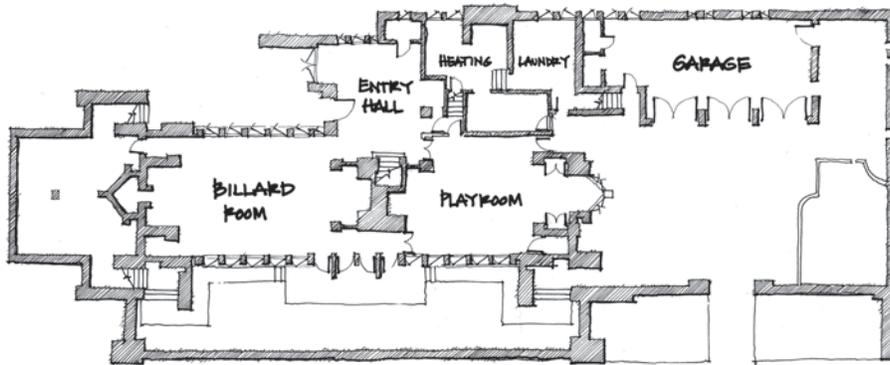


Robie House – view of first floor stairwell

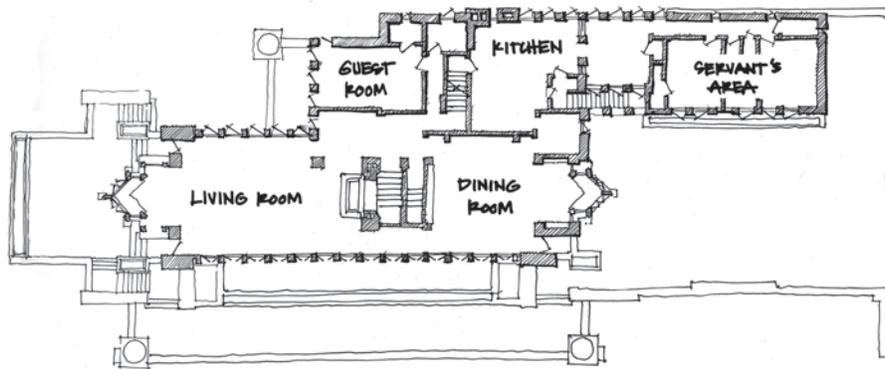
(all photos) © Hedrich Blessing.

TALK about it

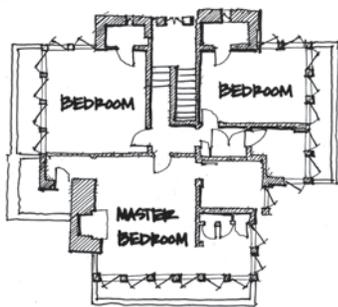
- Is there a clear path from the front door to the back door in the F10 House? In the Robie House? In your own home?
- Is there a back door in these homes?
- Going from the front to the back, which spaces or rooms do you travel through and in which order do you encounter them?
- Do you have to travel through one room to get to another? Or, are rooms arranged along a hallway?
- When you walk in the front door, how many rooms or parts of rooms can you immediately see?
- Can you find any evidence in your own home (such as old hinges or slots for the lock) where there was once a door? Why do you think the door was removed?



Robie House – ground floor plan



Robie House – first floor plan



Robie House – second floor plan

CHAPTER RESOURCES

Architecture, Form, Space, and Order, 2nd ed., Francis D.K. Ching. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1996. NA2760.C46

Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House: The Illustrated Story of an Architectural Masterpiece, Donald Hoffmann. New York: Dover Publications, 1984. NA7238.C4H63

The Robie House of Frank Lloyd Wright, Joseph Connors. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. NA7238.C4C65

The Wright Space, Pattern and Meaning in Frank Lloyd Wright's Houses, Grant Hildebrand. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991. NA737.W7H48

COMPARISONS **floor plan spaces**

FLOOR PLAN SPACES	 F10 HOUSE EHDD Architecture Chicago, IL	 ROBIE HOUSE Frank Lloyd Wright Chicago, IL	 MY HOME
year	2000	1906	
site	a narrow urban lot with neighboring homes close on both sides	a corner urban lot with one neighboring house along the back	
square footage	1,837 sq. feet (full basement, first and second floors)	9,063 sq. feet (full ground floor with living spaces, first and second floors)	
client	designed for a competition for an unknown client with a modest income	27 year-old Frederick and Lora Robie and their 3 children (Mr. Robie owned a bicycle manufacturing business)	
circulation paths inside the home	nearly a straight line from the front of the home to the back	a winding path inside the center of the floor plan, so a guest must climb stairs and make several 90° turns to reach the living room	
front door	on the first floor, raised up 7 steps off the ground	on the ground floor, level with the ground	
basement or ground floor rooms	basement set below ground; designed for storage and laundry; no guests would go to these rooms	floor set at ground level; designed for both guests (billiard room) and family (children's play room) although these are not visible from the front door	
main or first floor rooms	designed for guests (living room, dining room, and an open kitchen visible to anyone)	designed for guests (living room, dining room, guest bedroom); kitchen is for the family and staff, out of sight from guests	
upper floor rooms	designed for family (bedrooms)	designed for family (bedrooms)	
overall floor plan shape	long and narrow	long and narrow	
overall arrangement of rooms	short side of the living room faces the street, kitchen faces the alley in the back, bedrooms on second floor	long sides of the living room and dining room face the street corner, kitchen faces the neighboring house in the back, bedrooms on second floor	
division of rooms	first floor rooms are primarily organized in one large area with no doors or walls dividing up the space	most of the rooms are divided by walls and doors although the living room and dining room flow into each other divided only by a fireplace and open stairwell	