

A floor plan represents a horizontal section of a building as it would appear if cut through by an intersecting plane. After a horizontal plane slices through the construction, we remove the upper part. The floor plan is an orthographic projection of the portion that remains.

Floor plans open up the interior of a building to reveal a view that would otherwise not be possible. They unveil horizontal relationships and patterns not easily detected when walking through a building. On a horizontal picture plane, floor plans are able to disclose the configuration of walls and columns, the shape and dimensions of spaces, the pattern of window and door openings, and the connections between spaces as well as between the interior and exterior.

The horizontal plane of a plan slices through walls, columns, and other vertical elements of a building, as well as through all window and door openings. The plane of the cut is usually about 4 feet above the floor, but its height can vary according to the nature of the building design. Beyond the plane of the cut, we see the floor, counters, tabletops, and similar horizontal surfaces.

Critical to reading a floor plan is the ability to distinguish between solid matter and spatial void and to discern precisely where mass meets space. It is therefore important to emphasize in a graphic way what is cut in a floor plan, and to differentiate the cut material from what we can see through space below the plane of the cut. In order to convey a sense of the vertical dimension and the existence of a spatial volume, we must utilize a hierarchy of line weights or a range of tonal values. The technique we use depends on the scale of the floor plan, the drawing medium, and the required degree of contrast between solid matter and spatial void.

