

BuildSmart Academy – Plan Reading Cheat Sheet

1. Cover Sheet Essentials

Includes project name, address, parcel number, sheet index, applicable codes, and vicinity map. General notes set expectations.

2. Plan Code Index

- A - Architectural: Layouts and finishes
- S - Structural: Footers, slabs, reinforcement
- M - Mechanical: HVAC and ventilation
- E - Electrical: Circuits, outlets, panels
- P - Plumbing: Supply, waste, vents
- L - Landscape: Hardscape and greenscape
- C - Civil: Site prep, grading, utilities

3. Understanding Scale and Orientation

Common scale: 1/4" = 1'-0". Always locate the north arrow to align site plans accurately. Watch for matchlines and continuation lines.

4. Architectural Key Sheets

- Floor Plans: Room layout, walls, doors
- Elevations: External views with material markers
- Sections: Vertical cuts showing framing or insulation
- Schedules: Room sizes, finishes, windows, and doors with symbols to match

5. Structural Sheets

Foundation plans show spread footers, slab edges, or stem walls. Notes include reinforcement details like #5 @ 12" O.C. (on center).

6. MEP (Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing) Overview

- Mechanical: Equipment, duct sizes, returns
- Electrical: Switches (Δ), outlets ($\blacksquare$), fixtures ($\otimes$)
- Plumbing: Pipe sizes, water heater locations, risers

7. Common Symbols & Abbreviations

- $\perp$ – Perpendicular
- $\varnothing$ – Diameter ($\varnothing 4"$)
- CLR – Clear space
- T.O.W. – Top of Wall
- F.F.E. – Finished Floor Elevation
- U.N.O. – Unless Noted Otherwise
- AFF – Above Finished Floor
- BM – Beam
- BRG – Bearing
- CMU – Concrete Masonry Unit
- COL – Column
- CT – Ceramic Tile
- DN – Down
- ELEV – Elevation
- EQ – Equal
- FDN – Foundation
- FTG – Footing
- GA – Gauge
- GWB – Gypsum Wall Board (Drywall)

HDWR – Hardware
HR – Hour / Fire-Resistance Rating
INSUL – Insulation
JT – Joint
MAX – Maximum
MIN – Minimum
NTS – Not To Scale
OC – On Center
PT – Pressure Treated (lumber)
R – Radius
RCP – Reflected Ceiling Plan
TBD – To Be Determined
TYP – Typical
UNO – Unless Noted Otherwise
VIF – Verify In Field
WD – Wood

8. High-Impact Quick Checks

- Room square footage: Check against intent
- Window and door swings: For clearance
- HVAC: Return and supply vent locations
- Plumbing: Wet wall alignment
- Electrical: GFCI near water, outlet spacing
- Structural: Note beam directions, load paths

9. Pro-Level Tips

- Always compare revisions and redlines.
- Cross-reference notes between pages.
- Elevations sometimes contain missed details.
- Callouts override diagrams – read them first.