

1 ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

Exterior

M O D U L E

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► 1.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this Module, you should be able to identify the common architectural styles and features used in your area.

*Beyond
Standards*

This section is beyond the scope of a Standard inspection, but we believe it is useful and appropriate. This section helps to round out your basic knowledge of homes. It's kind of fun, too!

► 2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION TO ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

In this section, we are going to discuss some of the common architectural styles of homes and some architectural features that you should be able to recognize. While some specific features are prone to specific performance-related problems, the focus of this section is not on how well the building works or doesn't work. Our goal here is to round out your knowledge as a building expert.

*Client
Expectations*

Clients will expect you to know, at least in broad terms, the styles of buildings and the names of their components. While we try not to name-drop in an architectural sense, we believe that it is important to know the difference between a Gothic and a Palladian window, for example. We also think you ought to know the difference between a gable dormer and a shed dormer. You should also have some sense of the difference between Georgian homes, Mission homes and Craftsman homes, for example. We have to be careful because most homes are not pure in their style. Many North American homes are a combination of styles. Categorizing homes in a definitive manner is risky, but you should understand what constitutes the main elements of a given style.

Credit

This section is substantially based on a book entitled *A Field Guide to American Houses* by **Virginia and Lee McAlester** published by **Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.** You may want to get a copy of this very good book for your library.

*Just
Scratching
The Surface*

Our discussion will be superficial. We're trying to give a general practitioner's knowledge, not to turn you into a specialist. We apologize in advance for omitting your favorite type of house or not going into enough detail on the architectural elements you are most interested in.

*Focus On
The Exterior*

While architectural styles relate to the interior as well as the exterior of the building, we're going to focus on the exterior. This is a common approach, although it's not always reliable. There are many books that can round out your knowledge here and many home inspectors become dedicated students of architectural styles and acquire considerable expertise.

Exterior

MODULE

STUDY SESSION 1

- 1.** This section deals with some of the common building shapes and their respective roofing styles that help form the shape of a building.
- 2.** At the end of this Study Session, you should be able to –
 - distinguish detached, semi-detached, and attached house types.
 - explain in one sentence how floor plans can be used to distinguish between different styles of houses.
 - list at least five types of sloped roofs.
 - explain in one sentence the functions of roof overhangs.
 - describe in two sentences how chimneys and dormers can be used to enhance the architectural style of a home.
 - list at least six common dormer shapes.
- 3.** This Study Session should take you about 30 minutes to complete.
- 4.** Quick Quiz 1 is included at the end. The answers can be written in your book.

Key Words:

- **Row house**
- **Duplex**
- **Linear plan**
- **Massed**
- **Cape Cod**
- **Saltbox**
- **Four-square**
- **Butterfly roof**
- **Gambrel**
- **Dutch Colonial**
- **Mansard**
- **Bell-cast eave**
- **Pinnacle**
- **Cupola**
- **Turret**
- **Cresting**
- **Widow's walk**
- **Vergeboard**
- **Dormers – hip, gable, shed, flat, eyebrow, segmental, arched, inset**

► 3.0 BUILDING SHAPES & DETAILS

Most single-family homes are substantially rectangular. They can be one-story, one-and-a-half-story, two-story, two-and-a-half-story or three-story. Split-level houses have adjacent sections a half story above or below each other. These may be sidesplit or backsplit.

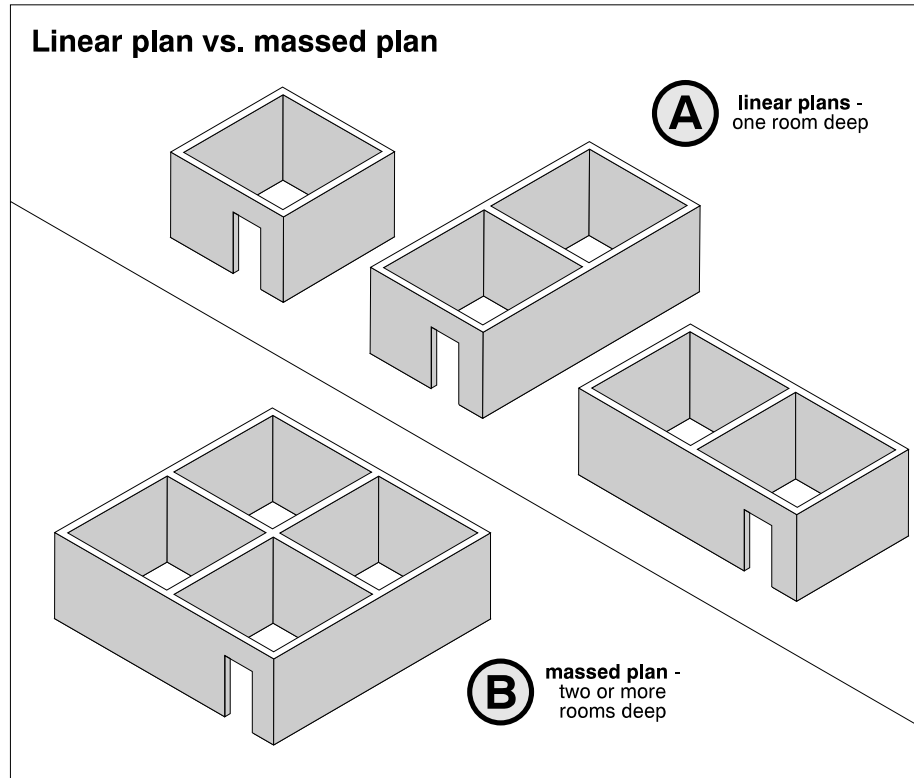
Houses can be longer in one direction than the other. Houses can also be boxes, with all four walls being equal length. Many houses are a combination of rectangles, with wings or T's off a main box. While curved walls are less common, you will find some. Walls that intersect each other at something other than a right angle are also less common, but you will find them.

3.1 DETACHED, SEMIDETACHED AND ATTACHED

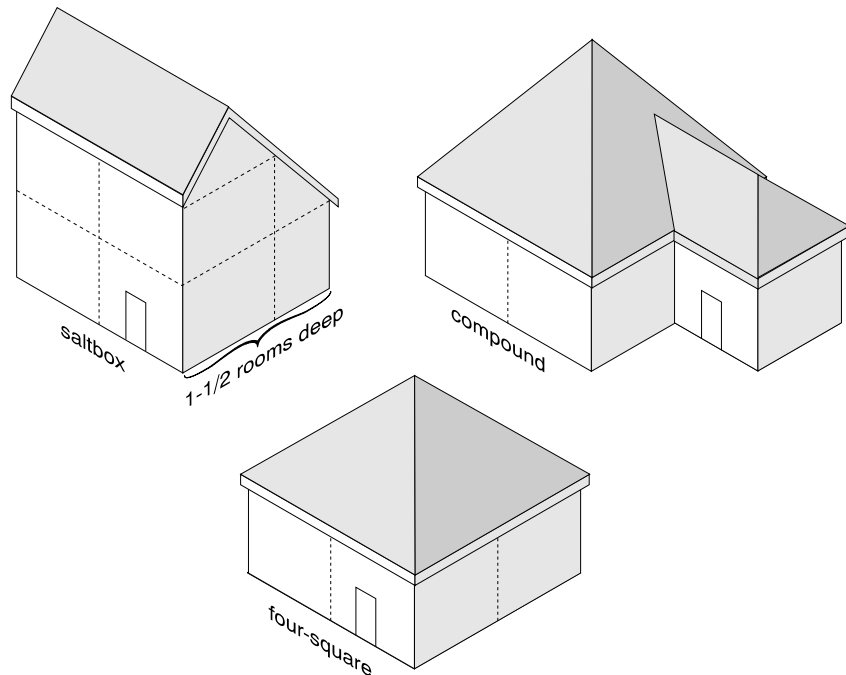
In rural areas, houses are almost always **detached**. In urban settings, houses may be detached or they may share one wall with their neighboring house. These houses are called **semidetached** in many areas. Where more than two houses are attached, they are often called **row houses** or, in some areas, **townhomes**. A detached building with a separate residence on the main floor and a different home on the second floor is called a **duplex**. In some areas, duplexes may also mean two dwelling units side by side in a single building.

3.2 FLOOR PLANS

Floor plans of houses vary widely and may be complex. However, with very few exceptions, they are made up of a number of simple elements. We've talked about houses being one, one-and-a-half, two, two-and-a-half or three stories in height. We can also look at the depth of the house. A **linear plan** house, for example, is essentially one room deep. A **massed house** is typically two rooms deep.



Transitional-style houses, like **Cape Cods** and **saltboxes**, are typically one-and-a-half rooms deep. Houses that are square are typically two rooms deep and two rooms wide. These are often called **four-square** homes. Adding units to form an L, T, U or H, makes the plan **compound**.

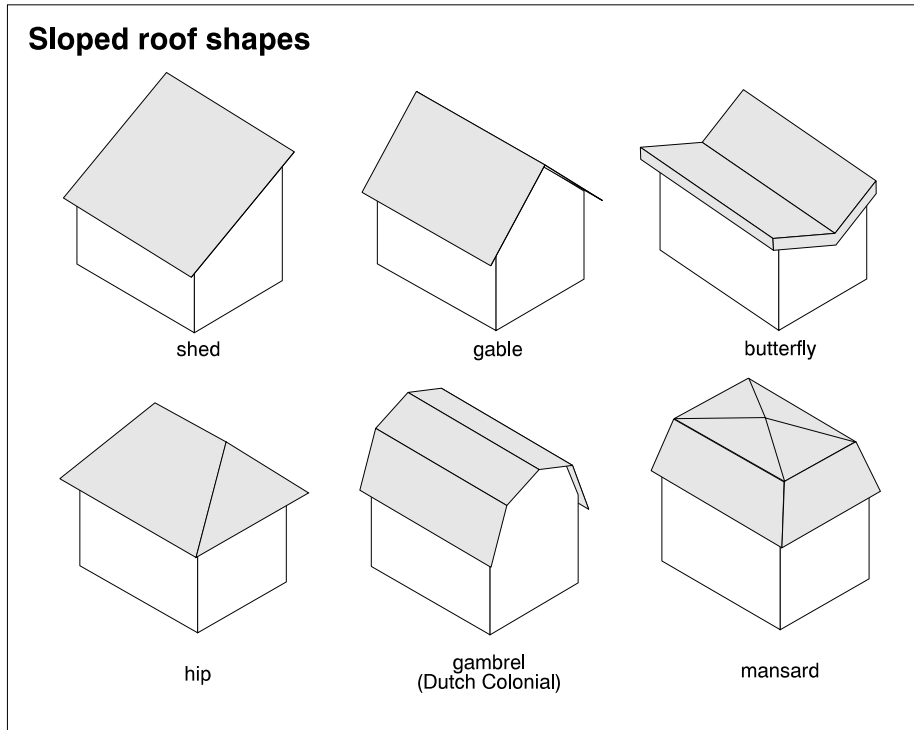
Saltbox, four-square and compound plans*Cars Affect
Floor Plans*

Floor plans have changed in the last century as automobiles have become part of our life. Part of the building envelope has been given over to garages, and floor plans have changed as a result. The garage may accommodate one or two cars and may be completely within the rectangle of the house, completely external, or partly within the house rectangle.

3.3 ROOF SHAPES

The shape of a building is, in part, determined by the shape of the roof.

The simplest roof is a **flat roof**. Flat roofs may overhang the building walls or building walls may extend slightly above the roofline, forming parapets. In the latter case, there is no overhang.



Roof Plane

The plane of the roof is usually uniform. Some roofs, however have a sweep over their entire slope, or may have a flare on the lower part of the roof. This is sometimes called a **bell-cast eave**.

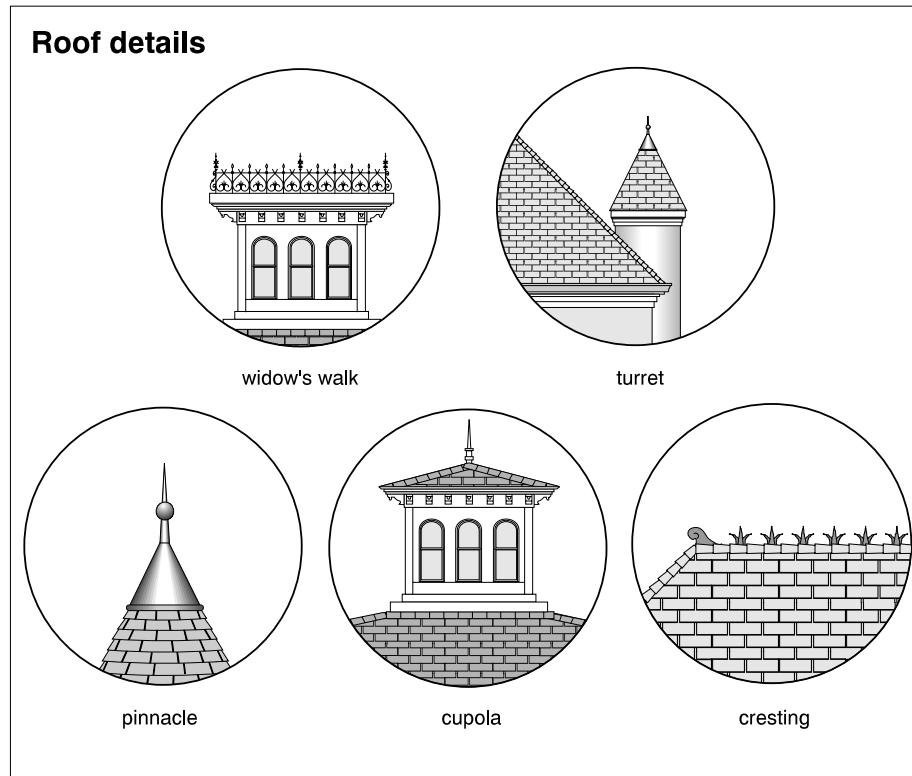


Slope Of The Roof

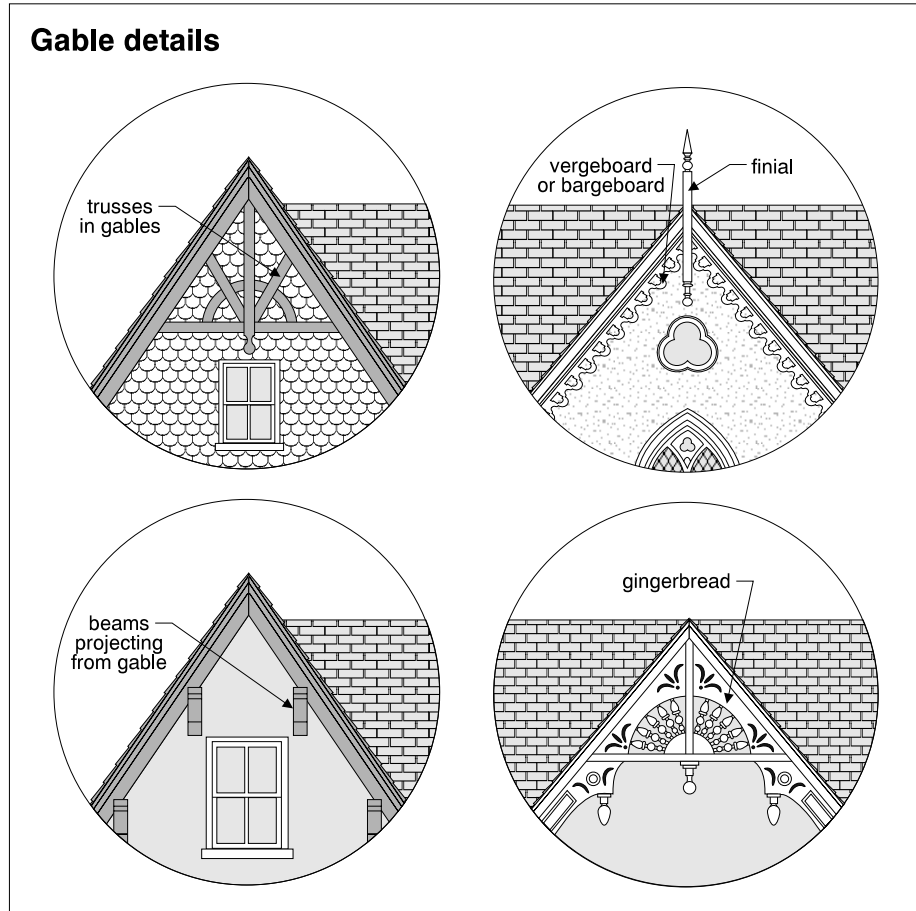
The slope of the roof impacts on the shape of the building and helps to establish the style of the home. Houses with flat or low-sloped roofs have the walls as the focal point. Houses with very steep roofs often use the roof as the focal point of the house.

Roof Details

Roofs may have **pinnacles**, **cupolas** or **turrets**. Roofs may have **cresting** along the ridge or, if there is a flat roof, there may be decorative iron railings around the perimeter, often called a **widow's walk**.



Gable Details The edge of the roofing that sticks out along a gable is called the **verge**. Roof gables may have decorative treatments such as intricately carved **vergeboards**, **barge-board** or **gingerbread**, trusses in the gables, or beams projecting from the gables.



Roof Overhangs

The amount of overhang on a roof may strongly influence the architectural style of the house. Some roofs have no overhang, others have a modest overhang, and still others have a very pronounced roof overhang. There is a functional issue here since generous roof overhangs generally keep walls drier. As you might imagine, generous roof overhangs tend to be more popular in wet and northern climates. There are, of course, exceptions to this.

Large overhangs also help to shield windows from direct sunlight, keeping the home cooler in hot weather.

Porch Roofs

Roof overhangs are sometimes exaggerated to form roofs for porches.

Secondary Roofs

Some homes rely on secondary roofs for much of their visual appeal. This includes roofs on dormers, bay windows and porticos, for example.

3.4 CHIMNEYS AND DORMERS

Chimneys

Chimneys and dormers can form architectural focal points of a home as well. They may be located around the perimeter of the building or on the interior. Chimneys can be small or very large. Multiple chimneys are often arranged in a symmetrical pattern (for example, at either end of the ridge on a gable house). Chimneys can be various shapes and are often a different material than the exterior wall surfaces. Decorative pots on chimney tops can be part of the visual appeal of a home.

