

Quality Control: A Specifications Preparation Checklist

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SUMMARY

Specifications in construction documents should be prepared by a construction specialist. The following checklist will aid the production of quality specifications.

COORDINATING WORDS AND PICTURES

Construction documents are the repository of the architect's vision and the principal medium of communication for realizing that vision in built form. The quality of these instruments of service is one of the primary criteria clients use to assess the quality of the architect's services.

Specifications should be prepared by a construction specialist with substantial field experience. Important qualifications may include formal education and training in engineering or architecture and knowledge of contract and construction law.

The following checklist, while not intended to be exhaustive, may help you produce quality specifications:

- Inform all project personnel about the proposed content of the specifications while the drawings are being prepared.
- Begin preparing the specifications at the same time as the working drawings; they will be better coordinated.
- Use standard specifications whenever possible.
- Where appropriate, use specifications from a previously completed successful project.
- Coordinate technical specifications carefully with drawings.
- Avoid ambiguous terminology—the biggest problem in specification writing.
- Be clear and concise; use adjectives and adverbs that have only one meaning.
- Use correct grammar and punctuation.
- Avoid local jargon.
- Do not use open-ended phrases or expressions such as “etc.”
- Use the imperative form of verbs—words such as “do” and “make” rather than “should be” or “could.”
- Limit each paragraph to one topic.
- Select building products carefully. Verify that the specified products are suitable for their intended use.
- Research building product manufacturers' reputations for on-time delivery and honoring warranties.
- Research all technical data on building products; do not rely on brochures.
- Communicate your intentions for the product to the prospective supplier and ask for comments in writing.
- Specify that a technical representative of the product manufacturer be on site for installation of new or unproven products or equipment.
- Avoid using the phrase “or equal.” Retain sole responsibility for accepting or rejecting any proposed substitutes.
- Ensure that completed drawings and specifications are checked by a qualified staff member not directly involved in the preparation of the documents. Omission of items from specifications often leads to claims by contractors for “extras.”
- Confirm that the specifications address all areas of the building depicted in the working drawings.
- Review the specifications for conformance to all applicable building codes.
- Review the “Scope of Work” and “Work Not Included in this Section” paragraphs of each specification subsection to confirm that all work has been specified and clearly assigned to only one discipline.

RESOURCES

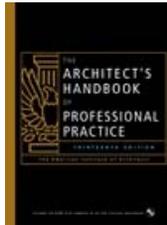
More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 09.01.01 Risk Management Checklist
- 11.02.02 Quality Control: A Working Drawings Preparation Checklist
- 11.04.01 Quality Control: A Construction Contract Administration Checklist

For More Information on This Topic

See “Construction Documentation—Specifications” by Gary Betts, FCSI, CCS, AIA, *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 18, page 582.



See also the 14th edition of the *Handbook*, which can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by email at bookstore@aia.org.



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Key Terms

- Design
- Construction documents
- Project manuals
- Specifications



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