



# The Designer's Guide to Doing Research

*Applying Knowledge to Inform Design*

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# The Necessity for Research

- The hallmark of a vital profession is its body of knowledge.
- In law, it's clearly defined as precedent, found in the great tomes and used, daily, by attorneys.
- In science, practitioners admit freely that they “stand on the shoulders of giants.”
- Those employed in the many subsets of the physical and behavioral sciences build their work on the findings of those who came before them, those who work next to them, and those who toil, simultaneously, in competing institutions.

# The Necessity for Research

- Although much of this body of knowledge is gleaned in the course of everyday practice, such opportunistic research is not enough to keep the professions at their cutting edge.
- It is the deep dives and the intense focus on confounding problems that lift each profession to its highest level of performance and increase the value of its contributions to the growth of human intelligence and betterment of the human condition.

Before You Do Design  
Research

# Research & Design

- Research
  - Represents a collection of insights and facts
  - A tool to inform future decisions
- Design
  - A physical manifestation of a series of decisions about form and function
- Research and Design
  - Both are a question-answering process

# Research & Design

- Designers are always posing questions and answering them in the physical forms of the spaces they develop.
- They are continuously translating both project-specific and generalized expert information into a language understood by clients and others through projected physical forms.

# Question Samples

- What precedents are there for the design of preschools where young people succeed cognitively and socially?
- Who are the experts on sales-record-breaking retail design? How do I find out from them what I should know about designing gourmet, organic food stores?
- How can I use a survey to collect the information I need to program the Massive Company headquarters?
- How should a space be designed to maximize the productivity of a work team? (And the even thornier question: How should we define productivity, anyway?)

- How much community space is just right in a new multifamily residential complex? What should it look like? Feel like?