

TEACHER GUIDE

Architecture at the Skirball

Grade 4 School Tour



A Program of the Education Department
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Skirball 
Cultural Center

WELCOME

Welcome to the Skirball Cultural Center! We are thrilled that you and your class will participate in the Architecture at the Skirball school tour. Please use this guide to help prepare your students for their visit.

ABOUT THE TOUR

On the tour, students will discover the art and science of architecture by exploring the dynamic indoor and outdoor spaces of the expansive Skirball campus, designed by internationally renowned architect Moshe Safdie. A take-home architecture sketchbook used throughout the tour helps students capture the lines, measurements, and textures of the Skirball's unique campus. Students then act as architects and civic planners as they engage in a collaborative building project.

Tour Objectives

Students will:

- Discover that architecture is a discipline that combines art, science, and mathematics and involves teamwork and collaboration.
- Identify major architectural elements such as materials, texture, color, shape, and patterns.
- Understand that throughout history, all cultures and communities have created built structures.
- Explore the campus of the Skirball as an example of architecture that fosters communal gathering.

ABOUT THE SKIRBALL

The Skirball Cultural Center is a place of meeting guided by the Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger and inspired by the American democratic ideals of freedom and equality. We welcome people of all communities and generations to participate in cultural experiences that celebrate discovery and hope, foster human connections, and call upon us to help build a more just society.

Open to the public since 1996, the Skirball has established itself as one of the world's most dynamic Jewish cultural institutions and among the leading cultural venues in Los Angeles. Visit skirball.org for more information.

ABOUT THE ARCHITECT

Moshe Safdie is an architect, urban planner, educator, and author. In a rare instance of a single architect overseeing multiple expansions of his master plan, Safdie designed all four construction phases of the Skirball's fifteen-acre campus and continues to remain involved with the campus today. The Skirball was Safdie's first cultural project in the United States. Learn more about Moshe Safdie [here](#).

PREPARING FOR THE TOUR

- Complete the pre-visit activities with your students to introduce them to the major themes of the tour.
- Prepare a readable nametag for each student.
- If your group is larger than 30 students, please evenly divide the group into two.
- Inform students that they will be walking around the Skirball campus for at least an hour, and advise them to dress in comfortable shoes and layers and to apply sunblock!
- To learn more about planning your trip to the Skirball, visit skirball.org/plan-your-school-visit or email education@skirball.org.

PRE- AND POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

Before Your Visit:

- Begin to open up the conversation about architecture in general with students.
 - Ask students what they think of when they hear the word “architecture.” We define it as **the art and science of designing buildings**.
 - Then ask students to think about one of their favorite places and discuss the following prompts:
 - Is it outside or inside?
 - How does it make you feel when you are there? Why?
 - What materials, shapes, colors, textures, or patterns can you identify there?
 - Can you think of a space or building that is similar to or different from the place you chose?
- Download this [Architecture at the Skirball PowerPoint presentation](#), and show it to your class to give them a visual overview of the Skirball. If you don't have access to a screen in your classroom, print the slides in color and use a smart board to show students, or pass the images around the classroom.

Note: Slides 11 and 12 include information about California missions, but only focus on their architecture. For more information regarding the complex history of the missions, including the oppression of indigenous people, please refer to your own resources, or read [this historical overview](#).
- Review the vocabulary list and see how the terms apply to the built environment of your classroom or school.
- Feel free to facilitate the activities outlined below, from the [PBS Kids Design Squad](#) website, with students either **before or after** the Architecture at the Skirball tour.
 - **Seismic Shake-up!** Like all buildings in earthquake-prone areas, the Skirball was specifically designed to withstand natural disasters such as earthquakes. Design a building that can withstand an earthquake—then put it to the test! Find the video and lesson [here](#).
 - **Paper Table:** During the Architecture at the Skirball tour, students will learn about the various challenges that Moshe Safdie faced in designing the Skirball. Encourage your students to take on the challenge of designing a paper table

that is at least eight inches tall and strong enough to hold a heavy book! Find the video and lesson [here](#).

After Your Visit:

- **Sketch It!** Encourage students to complete the activity on the last page of the architecture sketchbook used during the tour. As an extension of the activity, assign students to walk around their neighborhood, either at school or at home, and choose two buildings or structures that interest them. They can sketch these buildings on plain paper or graph paper, noting the various architectural and design elements discussed on the tour (such as shape, color, texture, materials, and patterns). Then, have students present their sketches to the class or in small groups, highlighting how the structures are similar and different.

- **Research Project: Los Angeles Landmarks**
 - Students choose an architectural landmark in the Los Angeles area. Encourage students to pick from [this Architectural Digest list](#), or choose any building or structure they like.
 - Instruct students to do their research—visit the site in person or online.
 - Ask the students to create an outline of a presentation, reminding them of the following:
 - Keep the presentation very brief—they will have a three-minute time limit.
 - Focus on one key idea, such as shapes, color, patterns, building materials, function of the structure, etc.
 - Incorporate a visual aid (print out photos, bring in postcards or brochures, etc.).
 - Make the presentation interactive, and involve their fellow students! Students might ask their peers for their observations of the building, or ask them what they notice or like about the structure.
 - After the presentation, reserve a couple of minutes for follow-up questions and feedback.

Teacher Survey!

Let us know what YOU thought of the tour! We love to receive feedback from teachers and students who participate in Skirball school tours, as we are always striving to improve our programs. Please fill out [this brief post-tour survey](#).

VOCABULARY

These are some of the terms that students may encounter on the tour. Please review any new vocabulary, as you see fit.

Amphitheater: A round or oval building, typically unroofed, with a central space for the presentation of dramatic or sporting events.

Architecture: The art and science of designing buildings.

Arroyo: A dry riverbed.

Column: A vertical, cylindrical support.

Corridor: A gallery or passage connecting parts of a building.

Courtyard: An unroofed area that is completely, or mostly, enclosed by the walls of a large building.

Façade: The main exterior face of a building, sometimes distinguished from the other faces by elaboration of architectural or ornamental details.

Geometric: Characterized by or decorated with regular lines and shapes.

Landscape architecture: The art and practice of designing the outdoor environment, especially designing parks or gardens together with buildings and roads.

Materials: Items or matter used for construction of buildings.

Organic: Relating to or derived from living matter. Organic shapes are free form, unpredictable, and flowing in appearance, visually suggesting the natural world.

Pillar: An upright shaft or structure, relatively slender in proportion to its height, and of any shape in section, used as a building support, or standing alone, as for a monument.

Plaza: A public square or open space in a city or town.

Symmetry: When the halves of a composition mirror each other.

Terrace: A raised level with a vertical or sloping front or sides faced with masonry, turf, or the like, especially one of a series of levels rising one above another.

Tower: A tall narrow building, either freestanding or forming part of a building, such as a church or castle.

TOUR CONNECTIONS TO STANDARDS

The Architecture at the Skirball tour strives to incorporate many ideas and questions specified in the Grade 4 content standards.

Next Generation Science Standards

Engineering Design

- ✓ 3-5-ETS1-1. Define a simple design problem reflecting a need or a want that includes specified criteria for success and constraints on materials, time, or cost.
- ✓ 3-5-ETS1-2. Generate and compare multiple possible solutions to a problem based on how well each is likely to meet the criteria and constraints of the problem.
- ✓ 3-5-ETS1-3. Plan and carry out fair tests in which variables are controlled and failure points are considered to identify aspects of a model or prototype that can be improved.

Common Core Mathematics

Measurement and Data

- ✓ Solve problems involving measurement and conversion of measurements from a larger unit to a smaller unit.
- ✓ Represent and interpret data.
- ✓ Geometric measurement: understand concepts of angle and measure angles.

Geometry

- ✓ Draw and identify lines and angles, and classify shapes by properties of their lines and angles.

ONLINE RESOURCES

This list of resources will be helpful in preparing your students for the Architecture at the Skirball tour and can also support math, science, and history curriculum following the program.

Skirball Cultural Center | skirball.org

Moshe Safdie | safdiearchitects.com

Learn more about the architectural firm's world-renowned projects.

PBS Kids Design Squad Global | pbskids.org/designsquad

This website is a destination for creative tweens and teens and promotes the following messages: You are creative and can solve problems. You can make things that help people. Dream big and build something together!

Gabrielino-Tongva Tribe | gabrielinotribe.org

This site includes an overview of the tribal history of the people indigenous to the Los Angeles basin, including the locations of the structures they built.

National Park Service | nps.gov

This site provides an overview of the architecture of the California missions.

Architectural Digest | architecturaldigest.com

Explore twenty-five architectural landmarks in Los Angeles.

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