

# Clue 2: Zoning

Zoning is one of the foundational cognitive moves in space planning. It's the moment when a designer stops thinking about a room as an empty box and starts thinking about it as a **system of purposeful activity areas**. It's not drawing furniture. It's not decorating. It's the strategic division of space based on *function, behavior, and flow*.

## Definition of Zoning

Zoning is the process of dividing a space into functional areas that support the activities, behaviors, and needs of the people using the space.

### Zoning is:

- **Functional:** Based on what people do in the space
- **Behavioral:** Based on how people move, gather, rest, work, or transition
- **Spatial:** Based on the physical constraints and opportunities of the room
- **Conceptual:** Happens *before* furniture, décor, or detailed planning
- **Flexible:** Zones can be open, implied, overlapping, or clearly defined

### Zoning also:

- Is division of a space into areas based on function or activity.
- Can be open (implied) or closed (defined by walls or partitions).
- Can be primary (main activities) or secondary (supporting activities).
- Is part of the early space-planning process.
- Typically represented with simple shapes or areas, not furniture.

## Why Zoning Matters

Zoning is the designer's first act of **intentional control** over a space. It ensures that:

- The space supports the client's lifestyle or program requirements
- Activities don't conflict (e.g., TV noise vs. reading nook)
- Circulation is logical and unobstructed
- The room feels cohesive rather than chaotic
- Later decisions—furniture layout, lighting, materials—have a clear rationale

**Zoning is the skeleton that holds the entire design together.**

Without it, everything else becomes guesswork.

## Types of Zones

**A. Primary Zones** - correspond directly to the major functions listed in a program.

- They typically occupy the largest portions of a room or floor plan.
- They require enough space to support the main activity without obstruction.
- They are usually the first zones identified during early planning.
- Primary zones often determine the general layout of the space.
- Primary zones may require access to utilities (e.g., plumbing for kitchens/bathrooms).
- Primary zones may influence where secondary zones are placed
- These are the **main activity areas**. Examples:
  - Living zone
  - Dining zone
  - Sleeping zone
  - Work zone
  - Cooking zone
  - Bathing zone
  - Socializing zone

**B. Secondary Zones**- smaller than primary zones and are areas that support or supplement primary activities.

- They are optional or flexible based on user needs.
- They are often located adjacent to or within primary zones.
- They may share space with primary zones.
- Secondary zones may be created using leftover or transitional space.
- May overlap with circulation paths.
- Secondary zones may be defined by furniture, lighting, or small architectural features.
- Supportive or adjacent functions.
  - Reading nook
  - Entry drop zone
  - Homework station
  - Coffee bar
  - Pet area

**C. Public, Private, and Service Zones**

Especially important in whole-home planning.

- **Public**- areas intended for shared or visitor use

- Include spaces such as living rooms, dining rooms, entries, and guest bathrooms.
  - Are typically located near main entrances.
  - Connect to circulation paths used by multiple people.
  - May require larger clearances for movement.
  - Might be visually accessible from other parts of the home.
  - Can influence the placement of private and service zones
- **Private-** areas intended for individual or restricted use
    - Include bedrooms, personal bathrooms, and sometimes offices.
    - Typically located away from main entrances.
    - Require acoustic separation from public zones.
    - Often have limited circulation passing through them.
    - May require access to storage or personal items.
    - Can be grouped together in residential layouts.
- **Service-** support functional or operational tasks
    - Include kitchens, laundry rooms, mudrooms, mechanical rooms, and storage rooms.
    - Frequently require access to utilities such as plumbing, ventilation, or electrical systems.
    - May be located near exterior doors for practical reasons.
    - Often generate noise, heat, or odors.
    - May influence the placement of adjacent zones due to utility lines.
    - Usually require durable materials and specific clearances

### C. Open vs. Closed Zones

- **Open-** defined without full-height walls or enclosed boundaries
  - Rely on visual or behavioral cues rather than walls.
  - Can be defined by rugs, lighting, ceiling changes, or furniture groupings.
  - Allow sightlines across multiple areas.
  - Often share space with other zones.
  - May be part of open-concept layouts.
  - May require careful placement of furniture to imply boundaries.
- **Closed-** defined by physical, architectural boundaries
  - Enclosed by walls, partitions, doors, or built-ins.
  - Provide physical separation from adjacent zones.
  - Usually have controlled access points.
  - Often require dedicated lighting and ventilation.

- May be used for activities requiring privacy or containment.
- Can influence circulation patterns due to door placement.

**D. Overlapping Zones** - ones that share space or functions.

- Occur when two activities occupy the same physical area.
- Can be defined by multifunctional furniture.
- Sometimes shift based on time of day or user behavior.
- Often require flexible layouts.
- May appear in small or multi-purpose spaces.

**E. Adjacent Zones**- placed next to each other.

- Share a boundary or edge.
- Are determined by program requirements.
- Can share circulation paths.
- Often influence each other's size and shape.
- May require visual or acoustic separation.

## How Zones Are Represented

- **Zones:**
  - Are drawn as loose shapes or areas, not precise measurements.
  - Are labeled by function (e.g., "sleeping," "dining," "study").
  - May overlap or be adjacent.
  - Can be separated by implied boundaries (rugs, lighting, furniture groupings).
  - Sometimes separated by physical boundaries (walls, screens, built-ins).

## Mystery File

You find a floor sketch covered with notes:

"Guests wandered into staff areas. Deliveries crossed dining spaces. Public and private activities mixed together."

## Your Task

Use the incorrect zones of the rooms found on the hotel floor plan to create three correct zones. Draw a loose plan of these on another piece of paper. Indicate which rooms should go into which of the three zones:

1. **Public Zone**
2. **Private Zone**
3. **Service Zone**