

Adobe Style

Adobe is a building material -- tightly compacted earth, clay, and straw that is hand- or form-shaped into bricks -- and also refers to a primarily residential architectural style found in the southwestern United States and some Spanish speaking countries. Construction methods and composition vary according to climate and local custom. Adobe style homes are influenced by early Pueblo dwellings with adobe walls and flat roofs. Vigas, Spanish for the heavy beams supporting the roof, are often exposed. Latillas, meaning sticks, are often used as infill between the roof beams. Adobe house plans may include Mission style details (stucco walls, arched doorways, and roof parapets) and/or Spanish Colonial Revival elements (red roof tiles, decorative railings, and tiled courtyards). The home designs of prominent New Mexico architect and preservationist John Gaw Meem were especially successful at combining a regional adobe esthetic with modern plans.



Beach Style

Beach homes are typically designed with the main floor raised off the ground -- to allow waves or floodwater to pass under the house. In some areas this building method is called "break-away construction" and is mandated by local codes. Beach house floor plans typically incorporate wide wraparound porches or spacious sun decks to bring living spaces outside and to take advantage of the waterfront setting's views and breezes. The Beach home style is an architectural interpretation of summer and warm weather living. Beach home plans are adaptable for use as vacation homes near water or to bring the feeling of a waterfront lifestyle elsewhere. Beach home plans are also called Coastal or Waterfront home plans and range in style from traditional to modern.



Bungalow Style

The Bungalow house plan is an all American architectural style, but the name has its roots in India. In the province of Bengal, single-family homes were called *bangla* or *bangala*. Typically one- or one-and-a-half story, with a front or rear porch connecting to a small garden, bungalows are distinguished by low-pitched shingled roofs, exposed beams and woodwork, built-in cabinetry, and stone and/or stucco or wood siding. A woody, garden-oriented version came to be known as the California bungalow and was widely popular in the United States during the first three decades of the 20th century, becoming, in effect, the Model T of home design. There's even a neighborhood in Pasadena, California called "Bungalow Heaven." Today's bungalow plans include welcoming front porches and lots of windows to invite you into open, yet cozy and efficient layouts. Bungalow floor plans usually cluster the kitchen, dining area, bedrooms, and bathroom around a central living area.



Colonial Style

Colonial style house plans are inspired by the practical homes built by early settlers in the American colonies and elsewhere, which were based on Dutch, English, French, and Spanish precedents. Colonial style home plans generally feature a welcoming center stair hall with living room on one side, dining room on the other, and kitchen and private rooms at the rear. These practical, family-friendly plans make entertaining a special pleasure. Typical Colonial style features include classical exterior styling centered on a columned entrance portico, sidelights and fanlights, and multi-pane double-hung windows with shutters. Exteriors are generally wood or brick. George Washington's Mt. Vernon is the most famous example of an original Colonial house, though it also represents the Plantation style of building.



Contemporary Style

The Contemporary style appeared in architect-designed homes of the fifties, sixties, and early seventies. Examples of Contemporary style homes from popular culture range from the "Monsanto House of the Future" at Disneyland of 1956 to the sitcom home of "The Brady Bunch," which ran on television from 1969 to 1973. Common characteristics include simple, clean lines with large windows devoid of decorative trim, flat or gabled roofs, asymmetrical shapes, and open floor plans. Contemporary exteriors are usually stucco, stone, brick or wood. The flat-roofed variations resemble International Style homes but lack the latter's stark white surfaces. Some Contemporary style home designs showcase natural materials and emphasize easy indoor-outdoor connections. In its broadest definition, contemporary simply means "of today." The Contemporary house style overlaps with the Modern home style but is less strictly tied to roots in the Bauhaus and the International Style.



Cottage House Plans

First popularized by home pattern books like *Cottage Residences* by Andrew Jackson Downing of 1842, Cottage style house plans are filled with individuality. Their asymmetrical plans are based on the belief that "a beautiful house fully reflects a fine character." A cottage style home is typically a smaller design that evokes a picturesque storybook charm, often harking back to the Gothic Revival style of architecture. Cottage house plans are flexible and fanciful, often featuring vertical board and batten, shingle, or stucco walls, gable roofs, charming balconies, and expansive bay windows. Today a cottage style house plan describes a cozy one-story cabin or vacation home in the mountains or by a lake, as well as a compact woodsy two-story home in a leafy suburb.



Country Style

Country house plans trace their origins to the picturesque cottages described by Andrew Jackson Downing in his books *Cottage Residences*, of 1842, and *The Architecture of Country Houses*, of 1850. The Country style overlaps with the Cottage style and the Farmhouse style, though Country style homes tend to be larger than cottages and most make expressive use of wood for porch posts, siding, and trim. Today's country style houses emphasize a woodsy simplicity with a central door, evenly spaced windows, and a front and/or a rear porch. They can be one or two stories high, are topped with a gable roof, and often include a wrap-around veranda. Although most closely associated with informal living, Country style homes can also be formal and elegant. Country house plans combine a romance for the past with updated floor plans appropriate for today's lifestyles.



Craftsman Style

Craftsman style house plans use simple forms and natural materials such as wood and stone to express a hand-crafted character and are comparable to Bungalow style home plans. Craftsman style plans were inspired primarily by the work of two California architect brothers, Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene in Pasadena in the early 20th century, who produced "ultimate bungalows" like the Gamble house of 1908. The Greenes were influenced by the English Arts & Crafts movement and Japanese woodworking traditions. Craftsman style homes and bungalows sprang up by the thousands, prompted by Craftsman style home pattern books and *The Craftsman Magazine*. The Craftsman house features a low-pitched, gabled roof (often hipped) with a wide overhang and exposed roof rafters, and a strong garden connection. Craftsman style porches are either full or partial width, with tapered columns or pedestals that extend to the ground level. The appeal of the Craftsman home design can be found in its rustic appearance and efficient plan that often includes built-in storage and cabinetry. The Craftsman house plans in this collection stay true to these ideals, offering variations of the Craftsman style home from simple one-story home plans to elaborate two-story estate floor plans.



French Country Style

Also known as French Provincial, French Country house plans are inspired by the rustic manors found across rural France. Particularly impressive on large properties, French Country style home plans also fit well into upscale suburban enclaves. French Country home styles range from modest farmhouse designs to estate-like chateaux combining rustic warmth of say, exposed wood beams with elegant European details like tall louvered shutters. Signature features include hipped roofs, walls of smooth plaster, brick, or stone, and arched windows and doors. Most French Country homes are two-story. More elaborate designs can include Georgian-style quoins, Palladian windows, Normandy-style turrets, and dormer windows.



Italian Style

Italian style homes -- part of the more general Mediterranean style -- feature gently-pitched roofs with wide, overhanging eaves supported by large decorative brackets recalling the pediment shape of classical temples. The Italian style floor plan typically revolves around a circular staircase in a tall tower. Common Italianate features are the grouping of either straight or round-headed windows into threes or small arcades, and the placement of porches or arcaded loggias between the tower and house or at the corners. Italian "Villa Style" homes were first popularized in two books by theorist Alexander Jackson Downing -- *Cottage Residences* -- of 1842, and *Architecture of Country Houses*, of 1850. The style could be built with many different materials, from stucco to wood, and was easily adapted depending on the budget. New technologies of the Victorian Era made it possible to quickly and inexpensively produce cast-iron and press-metal decorations.



Mediterranean Style

Mediterranean house plans draw design cues from the whole of the Mediterranean region, including Moorish, Byzantine, Italian and Spanish influences intermingled with traditions of Native Americans. Santa Barbara architect George Washington Smith helped popularize the style -- an important offshoot is called the Spanish Colonial Revival style -- in the 1920s with patio-oriented houses that have white plaster walls and tile roofs. A perennial favorite in warm climates, Mediterranean homes have evolved into an eclectic home style that's found across the country. Today Mediterranean homes are typically constructed with a stucco exterior, have shallow often red tiled roofs that create a wide overhang for needed shade in warm climates. In addition to such signature details as large windows and exposed beams, Mediterranean style homes include patios or courtyards and open arches to catch breezes.



Modern Style

Modern home designs offer clean lines, simple proportions, open plans and abundant natural light, and are descendants of the Bauhaus-influenced International style of architecture, which developed in the 1920s. The most influential architects of modern houses have been Le Corbusier, Mies Van Der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Charles and Ray Eames. Flat or shallow-pitched roofs, large expanses of glass, strong connections to outdoor space, and spare, unornamented walls are distinguishing characteristics of modern home style plans. The lot is often incorporated into the design, turning outdoor space into an alfresco living room. Mid-century modern style homes are increasingly valued for their easy indoor-outdoor flow and provide inspiration for today's Modern house plans.



Ranch Style

Ranch house plans - one story, long, low, patio- or courtyard-oriented designs - developed in the late 1920s and early 1930s and were inspired by historic early California haciendas and ranchos in places like San Diego and Monterey with their open "corredors" or exterior hallways connecting major rooms. The ranch house style of architecture was popularized by designers like Cliff May in Southern California (see my *Cliff May and the Modern Ranch House*, by Daniel P. Gregory, published by Rizzoli, 2008) and architects like William Wurster in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1930s and 1940s whose ranch houses were widely published in magazines like *Sunset* and *House Beautiful*. The modern ranch house became the dominant American home style during the 1950s and 1960s as suburban developments proliferated across the country. Ranch houses combine rustic elements like board and batten or stucco siding, wood overhangs, and simple gable roofs with modern features like open plans and expansive window walls -- often with sliding doors opening to patios. Ranch house plans usually rest on slab foundations, which eliminates the need for steps down to the garden and adds to the sense that house and lot are extensions of each other.



Spanish Style

Spanish House Plans encompass Spanish Colonial Revival style, Spanish Moorish style, and even the California Mission style. Spanish style plans draw on the heritage and architectural details of America's Spanish-colonial architecture found in California, the Southwest, Texas, and Florida. Spanish style homes feature red-tile roofs, stucco walls, and patios. Spanish Colonial Revival houses tend to have thick walls to create cool interiors that make them well suited to warm southern climates. Smooth white plaster wall surfaces contrast with heavy wrought-iron ornamentation around windows and doors, distinctively carved and shaped columns, and patterned tile or ceramic floor and stairway treatments bring touches of Andalusia and other parts of Old Spain -- as well as Mexico -- to the Spanish house plan. Spanish floor plans tend to have an asymmetrical front with small, irregularly placed windows and heavy, rounded doors with decorative carving. Santa Barbara architect George Washington Smith was one of the most influential early practitioners of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which became popular after it was used for major buildings at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Diego of 1915 (some, by architect Bertram Goodhue, still exist).



Traditional Style

Traditional house plans, sometimes referred to as American home plans, are the most commonly built home designs throughout the United States and Canada. Many traditional style home plans share characteristics with Colonial Revival style plans such as classical details like columns, while some are more cottage-like with gables and dormers. Typically, Traditional home plans are usually two-story and have covered entries, simple roof lines with at least one front facing gable, symmetrically spaced windows and little ornamentation. Inside, Traditional style floor plans tend to include kitchen-great rooms, covered grilling porches, and mudrooms or "friends entries" near the garage. Traditional home plans often feature a central entry with formal living and dining rooms flanking the foyer and more casual living spaces at the rear, opening to the backyard. While they may incorporate elements of historical American styles, Traditional house plans are more about comfortable living than pure architectural design.



Tudor Style

The Tudor house plan is easily identified by its exterior; diagonally placed heavy dark beams set against light, whitewashed plaster, and a patterned stone or brick chimney. Tudor style home plans draw their inspiration from medieval English half-timbered cottages and manor houses. Tudor home designs are typically one and a half to two stories with second-floor cladding in contrast with cladding on the first floor. Tudor house plans may include tall and narrow multi-paned casement or mullioned windows, rounded doorways, and a projecting bay window cantilevered over the first floor. Most Tudor floor plans offer volume entries, expansive living areas and high ceilings under steeply pitched roofs with gable ends. In the 1920s, when Tudor Revival houses became especially popular, the style was often called "Stockbroker Tudor" because it was favored by individuals in the finance industry.



Victorian Style

A brightly painted exterior, welcoming wrap-around front porch, multiple gables, and ornate details such as turned posts, spindles, brackets, gingerbread ornament along the eaves, and multiple shingle shapes are some of the characteristics of Victorian home plans. This explosion of ornamental detail was made possible by the development of manufacturing machinery for mass production in the late 19th century; Queen Anne style Victorians from the 1880s and 1890s are among the most elaborate and inspire many of today's Victorian home designs. Bay windows, wide verandas, turrets, and grand towers may be incorporated into a Victorian floor plan. Victorian house plans are composed of one or two levels having an asymmetrical layout and an irregular roof line in which gables face several directions and roof pitches vary. Victorian style front doors are generally four-paneled with narrow sidelights, while windows tend to be long and narrow and sometimes incorporate bays. Thanks to their irregular exterior shape, Victorian floor plans tend to be free form and rambling.

