

Twelve Quality Criteria

HOW-TO GUIDE

DESCRIPTION

The Twelve Quality Criteria worksheet is structured around three main themes: Protection, Comfort, and Enjoyment.

First, without basic protection from cars, noise, rain, and wind, people will generally avoid spending time in a space. Protection from these things is critical for a space to be regularly used.

Second, without elements that make walking, standing, sitting, seeing, and conversing comfortable, a place generally won't invite anyone to spend time there. Options for play and exercise can also make the space more inviting to people of all ages.

Finally, great public spaces tend to offer positive aesthetic and sensory experiences, take advantage of local climate conditions (for example, offering shade in warmer cities), and provide human-scale elements so visitors don't feel lost in their surroundings.

DIRECTIONS

Select your site: This tool works in a variety of public space types: plazas, parks, squares, and streets. You cannot expect that there is robust public life everywhere in a city, so choose a site where you think it is fair to conduct this assessment. When you are picking your space, consider it within a public space network. Spaces with low activity are not necessarily uninteresting to assess with this tool. Be aware that ground floor activities can be important for good public space.

Plan your trip: This survey will be most useful during an active time of day with good weather. But, it could also occur at any time of the day, on any day

of the week, since it looks at elements that do not change very much.

Get ready: Bring a clipboard, a writing utensil, and clothes for the weather.

When you get to the site: Take about five minutes to simply observe. This survey is not timed, but it is important that you take time to understand the space before you do the survey itself. Depending on where you stand in a given space, you may find a different Quality Criteria outcome. Start where most people spend time in this place, and add other locations as you see fit.

If you are in groups be sure to perform the survey on your own and then convene at the end for a conversation and comparison of evaluations.

Participants assess and take notes on the public space and whether it lives up to the criteria.

For every criterion, give it a score: a happy, neutral or sad face (meaning yes, in between, or no, respectively).

TWELVE URBAN QUALITY CRITERIA

LOCATION:



= YES



= IN BETWEEN



= NO

Protection	Protection against traffic and accidents. Do groups across age and ability experience traffic safety in the public space? Can one safely bike and walk without fear of being hit by a driver?	Protection against harm by others. Is the public space perceived to be safe both day and night? Are there people and activities at all hours of the day because the area has, for example, both residents and offices? Does the lighting provide safety at night as well as a good atmosphere?	Protection against unpleasant sensory experience. Are there noises, dust, smells, or other pollution? Does the public space function well when it's windy? Is there shelter from strong sun, rain, or minor flooding?
	Options for mobility. Is this space accessible? Are there physical elements that might limit or enhance personal mobility in the forms of walking, using a wheelchair, or pushing a stroller? Is it evident how to move through the space without having to take an illogical detour?	Options to stand and linger. Does the place have features you can stay and lean on, like a façade that invites one to spend time next to it, a bus stop, a bench, a tree, or a small ledge or niche?	Options for sitting. Are there good primary seating options such as benches or chairs? Or is there only secondary seating such as a stair, seat wall, or the edge of a fountain? Are there adequate non-commercial seating options so that sitting does not require spending money?
	Options for seeing. Are seating options placed so there are interesting things to look at?	Options for talking and listening/hearing. Is it possible to have a conversation here? Is it evident that you have the option to sit together and have a conversation?	Options for play, exercise, and activities. Are there options to be active at multiple times of the day and year?
Enjoyment	Scale. Is the public space and the building that surrounds it at a human scale? If people are at the edges of the space, can we still relate to them as people or are they lost in their surroundings?	Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate. Are local climatic aspects such as wind and sun taken into account? Are there varied conditions for spending time in public spaces at different times of year? With this in mind, where are the seating options placed? Are they located entirely in the shadows or the sun? And how are they oriented/placed in relation to wind? Are they protected?	Experience of aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experiences. Is the public space beautiful? Is it evident that there is good design both in terms of how things are shaped, as well as their durability?

NOTES: