

Office Zones

No one can work in an office if visitors and the public are constantly wandering through it.

Most offices have business of one kind or another with the public and/or people from other departments if the office is a large one.

Within the office itself there are different kinds of work tasks each of which has a different kind of contact with the public or inter-office staff. These tasks can be considered to make up the different kinds of zones within an office and so that the activities in one zone don't disturb the whole office, the zones should be placed on a gradient away from the entrance according

to the degrees of required privacy and quiet.

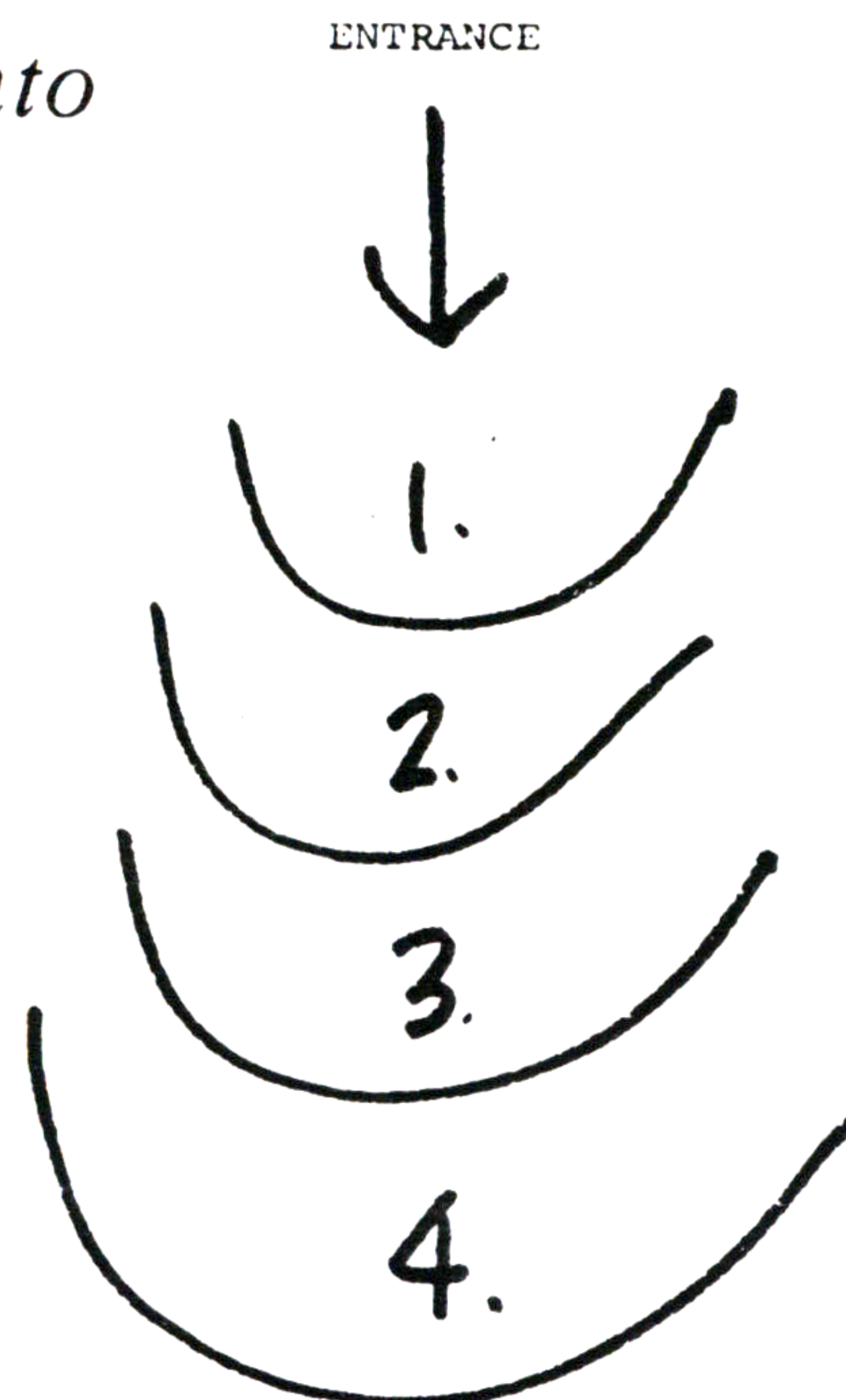
The zones are:

1. A zone for dealing with the public.
2. A semi public zone for meetings and interviews.
3. A zone where people work in groups and where quiet is essential.
4. A zone of private offices where privacy and quiet are required.

(continued over)

Therefore: Divide the office into four zones, and place them in the following order from the entrance:

1. A public zone.
2. A semi-public zone.
3. A quiet work zone.
4. A private office zone.



Office Zones

Problem (continued)

1. *A zone for dealing with the public at the front.*

The noise level is naturally high here. There are people coming and going, several people talking to different staff members at once, people coming in groups and talking to each other, etc. When the public areas are mixed with workspaces, people trying to work complain about the noise from the public areas. This annoyance was so strongly felt by people we interviewed, that they volunteered this information without being specifically asked about it. The public zone must be in the front of the department, and zoned off from the working areas.

2. *A semi-public zone for meeting, interviews, and where the staff might take breaks, next to the public areas.*

In a sense, this zone should be considered an extension of the first zone and should be open to it. Since people will probably wait in the public zone before a meeting, or an interview. On the other hand, there needs to be some distinction—meetings and interviews need some quiet and protection from the public zone. People in this zone must feel free to talk and laugh without feeling as though they are disturbing others, it should be well separated from the next zone which is for working.

3. *A zone where people work in groups and where quiet is essential, next on the gradient.*

The majority of people who work in offices do not have an office of their own. They work in groups but they still need peace and quiet. They may have some members of

the public visiting them and possibly people from other parts of the office. Conversations are usually between two people, and they are business like and subdued. It is alright for two people in this case to talk quietly, feel as though they must, and other people are less apt to be disturbed because the conversation is about business that they are also involved in. Several studies have been made which indicate that noises are disturbing and distracting to a person if the noises are unrelated directly to the work he himself is involved in.

"Noise is another aspect of building form which has been shown to effect office workers. Langdon has published a study of annoyance caused by noise in automatic data processing offices. Three types of staff were affected—clerks, punch card operators, and machine operators—and it was found that annoyance, caused by the same noise level, varied according to the job. Each job it seems has attached to it certain expectations of the environment". (*Francis Duffy, Social Conditions in the Office Environment: Job, Worker, and Building.*)

4. *A zone of private offices where privacy and quiet are required is deepest in the gradient.*

Whatever the reasons for private offices, they are meant to provide privacy and quiet, and they should be placed furthest back. There are fewer people in this zone, hence the traffic of visitors is apt to be less than in the other zones. Any meetings which do take place, take place in a room, and therefore are not disturbing to other people.

By: Barbara Schreiner

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This pattern is tentative. If you have any evidence to support or refute its current formulation, please send it to the Center for Environmental Structure, P.O. Box 5156, Berkeley, California 94705; we will add your comments to the next edition.