

Interior design is a broad-spectrum discipline that thrives in the vitality of energy, intellectual engagement, mutual respect, conflict, and collaboration that flow from contact with other environmental specializations.

The “safe haven” model cultivates a creative, idea-based environment. Inscriptive practice or the rethinking and situation-seeking approach is emphasized. More full-time design educators teach in this model, which fosters creativity and individual voice. Students are challenged and expected to achieve senior designer and high-level critical positions in emerging practices. The industry standard of auto-cad is often omitted or supplemented with exposure to digital modeling, animation, and interactive information architecture. “Safe-haven” model schools are marked by graduating students who lack definitive competency and marketable skills. The IIDA/E-Lab Report concludes that a combined approach offering both “safe haven” and “simulation” experiences best prepares the student for high-level entry into the profession.²⁵

The range of instruction, inquiry, implementation, and invention is ongoing in the continual definition of interior design education. Programs are located in various settings—Schools of Architecture, Art and Design, Human Ecology, or Human Economics. In the “design education” mode of instruction exist programs which emphasize Interior Decoration. These curriculums stress historical styles, history and placement of furniture, color, textiles, window treatments, lighting, materials, and selection of complementary objects. Students graduating from decorative programs tend to work in private practice, residential interiors, commercial product, store-home consulting, furniture and material showrooms, antiques, object appraisal, and commissioned art positions. Schools emphasizing inquiry are based in material, environmental, and cultural design research programs. Implementation as a “design education” model exposes students to principles of residential interior decoration and space planning but also promotes specialized training in commercial space planning, contract design, project management, facilities management, and potential specializations in lighting, acoustics, museum curatorial work, or exhibition design. The professionalism of this type of program stresses functional design planning principles equally with aesthetics and performance standards of materials and furnishings. “Invention as Design Education” promotes the emergence of interior architecture, a field practiced and recognized in Europe. This model develops critical thinking and strategic interpretive research skills along different trajectories than either architectural education or design education. Human scale and use are the basis for research and design as culturally connected practice. Studios balance creative exploration of ideas with practical skill development and competency. Study trips, internships, and digital immersion in delineation, modeling, and communication