



History of AIA Contract Documents

The American Institute of Architects publishes more than 100 contracts and administrative forms that are recognized throughout the design and construction industry as the benchmark documents for managing transactions and relationships involved in construction projects. The AIA's prominence in the field is based on 120 years of experience creating and updating its documents. The history of AIA Contract Documents dates to 1888 when the AIA first published the Uniform Contract for use between an owner and a contractor. In 1911, the AIA published its first standardized general conditions for construction. The 2007 edition of AIA Document A201™ is the sixteenth edition of those general conditions.

AIA documents maintain a symbiotic relationship with the industry, each profoundly influencing the other. The AIA regularly revises its documents to take into account recent developments in the construction industry. Standardized documents for design-build, for different types of construction management, and for international practice have been published in recent years. ([Revision Policy](#))

AIA documents are intended for nationwide use and are not drafted to conform to the law of any one state. With that caveat, however, AIA documents provide a solid basis of contract provisions that are enforceable under the existing law at the time of publication. A significant body of case law concerning contracts for design and construction is based largely on the language of AIA standard forms. Those court decisions are discussed in *The American Institute of Architects Legal Citator*, published by Matthew Bender & Company, Inc., a member of LexisNexis Group. Recent cases are summarized and all cases are keyed to the specific provisions in the AIA documents to which they relate.

The AIA's drafting process is a thorough and deliberate approach that strives to achieve a fair balance among interests affected by the contract documents. The process is based on the cooperative input of a Documents Committee of practicing architects who have been appointed based on their experience, regional diversity, and variety of practices. Beyond the input of these committee members, the AIA also solicits feedback from owners, general contractors, engineers, subcontractors, sureties, lawyers, insurers, and others. By considering the opinions of a broad range of disciplines, the AIA strives to publish documents that account for the best interests of all parties affected by them. ([Drafting Principles](#))

AIA documents are grouped by [family and by series](#). This dual method of organizing the documents makes it quicker and easier for users to select the documents appropriate for their projects. Documents in the same family are coordinated to tie together the various legal and working relationships on the same project types or delivery methods. They are linked by common terminology and procedures and may also adopt one another by reference. The relevant terms of A201™–2007, for example, are adopted by reference in several agreements including A101™–2007, A102™–2007, A103™–2007, A401™–2007, B101™–2007, and B103™–2007. Documents in each series reflect the purpose of the document. For example, owner/contractor agreements are found in the A series, and contract administration forms are in the G series.

For purposes of reference and information, sample copies of current AIA documents are contained in the *Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, available through [AIA Connecticut](#). Sample copies of all the current documents are included on the CD-ROM that accompanies the Handbook. The Handbook also includes a section titled the "Documents Finder," which provides a brief synopsis of each document, organized by family.

For a section-by-section explanation of the content of the AIA's two most influential documents view the [B101™–2007 Commentary](#) and the [A201™–2007 Commentary](#).