



Module 7 - Notations

7.2 NOTATIONS

7.2.1 Purpose of Notes

Construction documents include both drawings and specifications, which are meant to be complementary documents. **Drawings** convey design intent and may show multiple views, either of the whole project or its parts. **Specifications** provide detailed information and instructions concerning the project by setting requirements for the physical qualities, chemical properties, performance requirements, and standards of workmanship associated with the manufacture and installation of systems, assemblies, and components.

Drawings: Graphic and textual information organized on a two-dimensional surface for the purpose of conveying data about a specific portion of a project.

Specifications: Define the qualitative requirements for products, materials, and workmanship on which the construction contract is based.

To more fully understand the drawings, text—in the form of notes—is added to the illustrations. The notes may provide:

- information
- identification
- instruction

Drawing notes, as part of the contract documents, have important legal consequences. Just as in creating a specification section, care must be taken to ensure that drawing notes do not establish a subdivision of the work; assign portions of the work to subcontractors; or create unintended obligations between the parties to the design and construction of the work. Terms used within notes should be consistent with terms used within the specifications. Notes should not include vague references such as "SEE SPECIFICATIONS." They should be specific as discussed later under Reference Keynotes.

7.2.2 Historical Progression

Drawings produced during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were primarily graphic. These graphics used notes sparingly to identify building components and provide general instruction while requiring the designing architect or engineer to provide supplemental instruction in the field. This "master builder" method of practice has changed rapidly over the years and today has been replaced by the use of highly detailed and specific construction contract documents.

During the post World War II era, "keying" became a standard method for improving drawing clarity through text reduction within the **drawing block**. A "keyed" note consisted of an alphanumeric indicator symbol and leader line with a legend of those symbols and the full text notes located elsewhere on the drawing sheet. The keying legend provided users with a single reference point for keyed notes and allowed a single note, written once, to be used in multiple drawing locations through repetition of the alphanumeric keyed symbols. As the information required on drawings became denser, the use of keyed notes improved drafting efficiency, resulting in clearer, more concise drawings.

Drawing Blocks: Drawing modules containing graphic or textual information. Refer to [Sheet Organization, UDS section 2.3](#) for additional information.

"Keynoting" developed into a technique for "tying" keyed drawing notes to related specification sections more

closely. While these "keynotes" might be organized by **MasterFormat™**, there was little consistency among design firms or the documents produced by those firms.

MasterFormat™: A master list of numbers and titles classified by work results or construction practices that is primarily used to organize project manuals and detailed cost information, and relate drawing notations to specifications.