

# Family Fun at Fallingwater

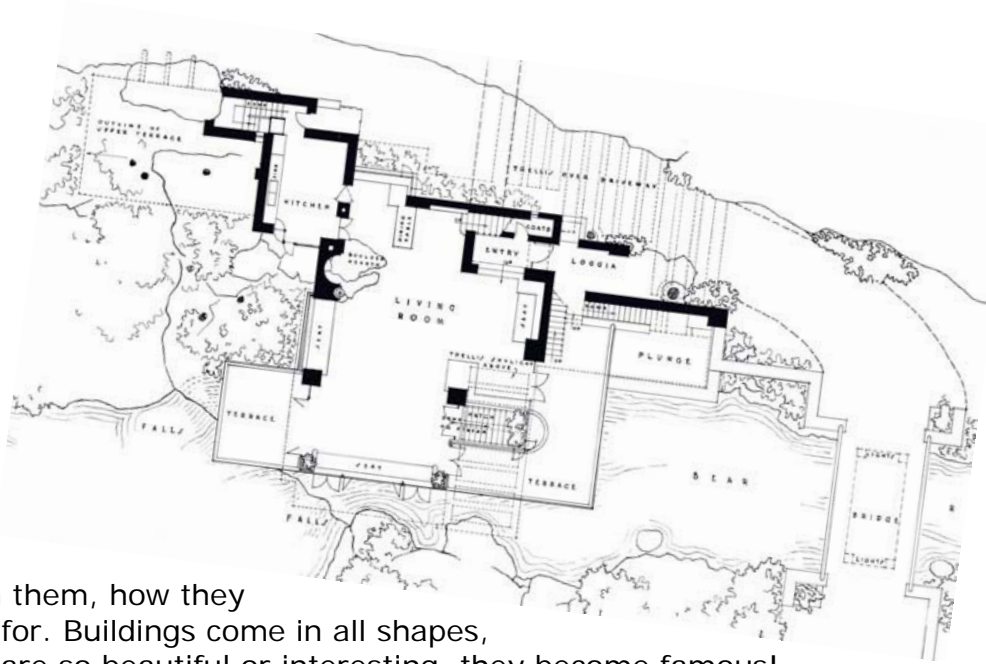
## Architecture of Fallingwater

### What is Architecture?

The word **architecture** has two meanings. Architecture is:

1. The activity of designing and planning buildings
2. The style of a building

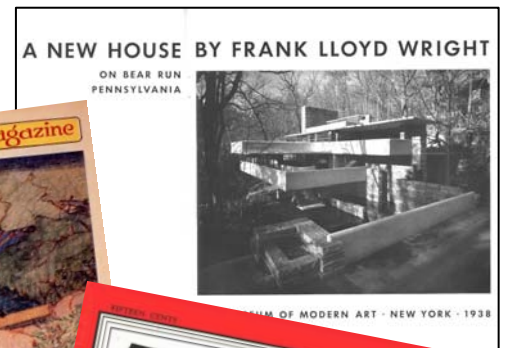
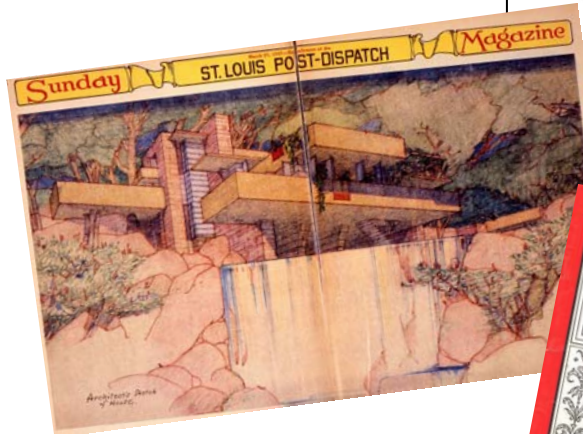
Every building is built for a reason. Some buildings are meant to be lived in, while others are built to be businesses, schools, palaces, and more! We can learn a lot when we look closely at buildings, especially about the people who built or lived in them, how they were built, and what they were used for. Buildings come in all shapes, sizes, and materials. Some buildings are so beautiful or interesting, they become famous!



Can you think of any famous buildings?

Fallingwater is the name of a very special house that is built over a waterfall. Frank Lloyd Wright, America's most famous architect, designed the house for his clients, the Kaufmann family. Fallingwater was built between 1936 and 1939. It instantly became famous, and today it is a National Historic Landmark.

Why is it so famous? Think about it! A house that doesn't even appear to stand on solid ground, but instead stretches out over a 30' waterfall. It captured everyone's imagination and was in newspapers, books, and magazine covers like Time in 1938.



# BUILDING WITH NATURE

Wild animals live near it. Trees surround it. Water swirls underneath. Huge boulders rest at its feet. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed Fallingwater to be in harmony with nature.

When Wright first visited the Bear Run property he was shown areas suitable for a new house, the falls with its several cascades and large, smooth rock surface for basking. Wright designed a house like nothing ever seen before. He wrote a letter to Edgar Kaufmann saying he was so stirred by the setting that he wanted to create a building that would be an accompaniment to the music of the stream.

Look at the building.  
What sounds do you hear?

The house's terraces echo the pattern of the rock ledges below.

When the Kaufmanns first looked at Wright's drawings, they were very surprised! They thought their new house would have a wonderful view of the falls. But instead, with the house right on top of the falls, it was very difficult to even see them. But not to hear them! Frank Lloyd Wright told them that he wanted them to live with the waterfalls, to make them part of their everyday life, and not just to look at them now and then.



Buildings are designed by people called **architects**. They draw plans of buildings, called **blueprints**, that tell other people how to make the building.

Wright used only 4 materials to build Fallingwater—sandstone, reinforced concrete, steel and glass. Can you find all of them?

All the stone at Fallingwater was quarried about 500 feet west of the waterfalls. Workers put up the stone in a rough, shifting manner so it would look like rock coming right from the ground. Do you think the way the stone is arranged joins the house with the land? Why or why not?

You can see steel throughout the house in railings, shelves, and windows and doors. Wright decided to have the steel painted red to remind people of the red color of iron ore (which steel is made of) and also of the fiery method used to create steel. What color would you paint the steel? Why?

Wright used a lot of clear glass to allow the outside to flow freely into the inside. At certain times of day, the glass becomes very reflective and reminds some people of the mirror-like surfaces of a calm pool of water. At night, the glass seems to disappear.

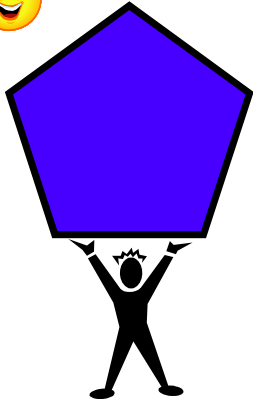
Wright chose the pale ochre color of the concrete to match the back of a fallen rhododendron leaf. Can you find a fallen leaf on the ground that matches the color of the paint?

# Shapes

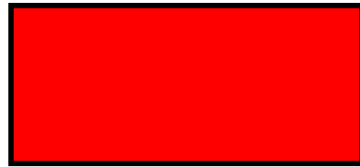
Buildings are made up of many different shapes and lines.



How many of these geometric shapes can you find at Fallingwater? Where are they?



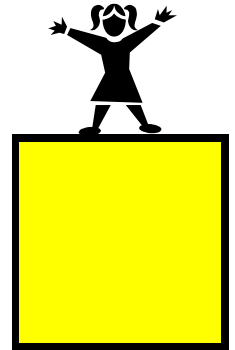
pentagon



rectangle



semi-circle



square

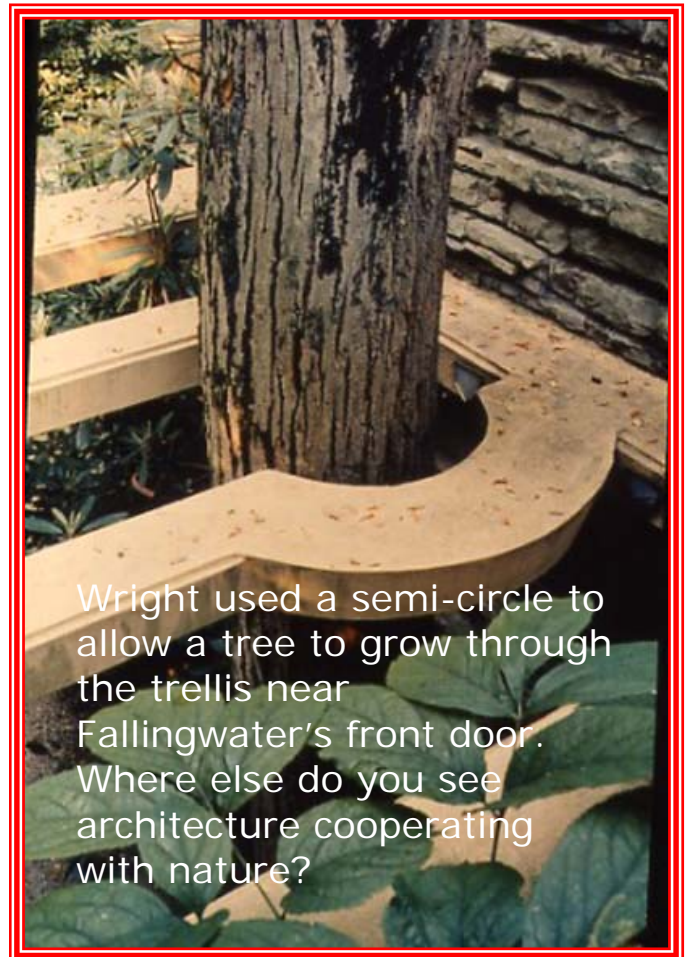
## Fallingwater Challenge!

Explore the outside of Fallingwater, then try to answer these questions. Answers are below:

1. If your footstep is about 1 foot long, how long is the bridge that leads to Fallingwater?
2. Look from the bottom of waterfall all the way to the top of the hill. How many stories is Fallingwater?
3. Can you count higher than 100? If so, try counting the number of windows and glass doors on Fallingwater. How many can you find?
4. Fallingwater is built of a few simple materials. How many can you find?

Answers:

1. The bridge spans over 28 feet.
2. The Main House is 3 stories, plus a partial basement. The Guest House is 2 stories, including the Servants Quarters.
3. A lot!
4. There are 4 basic materials—reinforced concrete, stone, steel, and glass.



Wright used a semi-circle to allow a tree to grow through the trellis near Fallingwater's front door. Where else do you see architecture cooperating with nature?