

# Construction and Architecture English Jargon Quick Reference

Field-specific terms, contrast pairs, and high-pressure sentence frames

**Audience: architects, construction managers, project engineers, site supervisors, estimators, owners' representatives, subcontractor coordinators, and design-build teams**

Focus: A construction and architecture English curriculum for design intent, RFIs, change orders, site coordination, safety, schedule pressure, permitting, punch lists, claims, and client communication.

Designed for advanced ESL learners who already use professional English and need industry-specific terminology, realistic meetings, role-play pressure, careful pushback, and polished workplace outputs.

Teaching stance: this is language and workplace-communication training, not legal, medical, financial, safety, or regulatory advice. Instructors should connect every scenario to the learner's current company policies, local rules, and approved procedures.

## Nomenclature and Jargon

These are classroom working definitions. Learners should adapt wording to their organization's policies, systems, and local regulatory environment.

### Design Intent and Client Requirements

Term	Working meaning
design intent	Working construction and architecture term used in design intent and client requirements; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
program	Working construction and architecture term used in design intent and client requirements; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
constructability	Working construction and architecture term used in design intent and client requirements; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
scope	Defined boundary of work, responsibility, deliverables, assumptions, and exclusions.

### Drawings, Specifications, and RFIs

Term	Working meaning
RFI	Working construction and architecture term used in drawings, specifications, and rfis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
specification	Working construction and architecture term used in drawings, specifications, and rfis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
drawing set	Working construction and architecture term used in drawings, specifications, and rfis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
submittal	Working construction and architecture term used in drawings, specifications, and rfis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

### Change Orders and Cost Control

Term	Working meaning
change order	Working construction and architecture term used in change orders and cost control; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
allowance	Working construction and architecture term used in change orders and cost control; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
contingency	Working construction and architecture term used in change orders and cost control; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
notice	Working construction and architecture term used in change orders and cost control; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

### Schedule, Sequencing, and Critical Path

Term	Working meaning
critical path	Sequence of dependent work that determines the shortest feasible timeline.
float	Working construction and architecture term used in schedule, sequencing, and critical path; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
lookahead schedule	Working construction and architecture term used in schedule, sequencing, and critical path; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Term	Working meaning
resequencing	Working construction and architecture term used in schedule, sequencing, and critical path; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

## Site Safety and Toolbox Talks

Term	Working meaning
PPE	Working construction and architecture term used in site safety and toolbox talks; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
fall protection	Working construction and architecture term used in site safety and toolbox talks; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
toolbox talk	Working construction and architecture term used in site safety and toolbox talks; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
stop work	Working construction and architecture term used in site safety and toolbox talks; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

## Permitting, Inspections, and Code Issues

Term	Working meaning
permit	Working construction and architecture term used in permitting, inspections, and code issues; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
inspection	Working construction and architecture term used in permitting, inspections, and code issues; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
code compliance	Working construction and architecture term used in permitting, inspections, and code issues; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
reinspection	Working construction and architecture term used in permitting, inspections, and code issues; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

## Quality, Punch List, and Closeout

Term	Working meaning
punch list	Working construction and architecture term used in quality, punch list, and closeout; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
substantial completion	Working construction and architecture term used in quality, punch list, and closeout; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
warranty	Working construction and architecture term used in quality, punch list, and closeout; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
closeout	Working construction and architecture term used in quality, punch list, and closeout; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

## Claims, Disputes, and Documentation

Term	Working meaning
claim	A statement that may need evidence, approval, qualification, or disclosure before it is used externally.
daily report	Working construction and architecture term used in claims, disputes, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
meeting minutes	Working construction and architecture term used in claims, disputes, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Term	Working meaning
entitlement	Working construction and architecture term used in claims, disputes, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

## Industry-Specific Meeting Moves

Situation	Useful language
Design Intent and Client Requirements	Before we commit, I want to confirm design intent, program, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If scope, fee, schedule, code, and constructability implications need review., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Drawings, Specifications, and RFIs	Before we commit, I want to confirm RFI, specification, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If contract documents, rfi process, schedule impact, and design response are needed., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Change Orders and Cost Control	Before we commit, I want to confirm change order, allowance, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If contract terms, notice, evidence, schedule, and pricing must be reviewed., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Schedule, Sequencing, and Critical Path	Before we commit, I want to confirm critical path, float, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If critical path, float, resequencing, crew availability, and weather risk matter., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Site Safety and Toolbox Talks	Before we commit, I want to confirm PPE, fall protection, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If safety requirements, stop-work authority, training, and documentation apply., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Permitting, Inspections, and Code Issues	Before we commit, I want to confirm permit, inspection, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If code interpretation, approved drawings, corrective work, and reinspection are required., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Quality, Punch List, and Closeout	Before we commit, I want to confirm punch list, substantial completion, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If life safety, substantial completion, warranties, and closeout documents need clarity., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Claims, Disputes, and Documentation	Before we commit, I want to confirm claim, daily report, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If daily reports, notices, photos, meeting minutes, and contract language matter., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.

## High-pressure pushback frames

- I understand the urgency. The risk is that we move faster than the evidence or process supports.
- I am not blocking the goal. I am naming the condition we need before the decision is safe and credible.
- If we accept this risk, we should name the owner, document the assumption, and define the trigger for escalation.
- That may be possible, but not under the current scope, timeline, or approval path.
- Let's separate what we know, what we assume, and what still needs confirmation.

## Contrast Pairs

Do not confuse	Useful distinction
design intent vs scope	In design intent and client requirements, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision.
RFI vs submittal	In drawings, specifications, and rfis, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision.

Do not confuse	Useful distinction
change order vs notice	In change orders and cost control, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision.
critical path vs resequencing	In schedule, sequencing, and critical path, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision.
PPE vs stop work	In site safety and toolbox talks, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision.
permit vs reinspection	In permitting, inspections, and code issues, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision.
punch list vs closeout	In quality, punch list, and closeout, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision.
claim vs entitlement	In claims, disputes, and documentation, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision.