

ArchiCAD advice (answers to some questions I have received from students this past week), October 22).

Printing to a PDF file:

Set up your line weights first. I like to use hairlines for the on screen display and for most quick linework for printing (very thin lines). Line thicknesses are established in the pens and colours dialog box. You can select a pen colour, and adjust the thickness for printing or for on-screen display. There is another dialog box for determining whether or not you will see hairlines on screen or true line thicknesses. I just use hairlines on screen: easier for accuracy in making things and easier on my eyes.

On a Mac, I first zoom into the area I want to print to a pdf file, and I use a window proportion that relates to either a landscape or portrait orientation page size. I then set the page layout (portrait or landscape). Then I go File/Print, set the printer quality to the highest resolution and decide on colour or black and white, set the ArchiCAD parameters (in the same print menu) to fit to one page and to print present zoom area, then print to pdf (option at bottom left). PC printing is similar, but many of the Mac features described above you adjust in the main printer dialog box.

Someone asked if it is possible to draw a site plan on top of the 3D model plan view. Of course. I suggest locking all layers containing 3D elements, then make new layers for lines, fills, text, etc. Work on your 2D plan on top of the locked 3D elements, then you can hide the layers with 3D elements when you want to print.

Later in the development of your project, when you are not using lines to show walls or building outlines, you can just use the wall tool to show the building walls, and you can use the door and window tools to save a lot of time instead of drawing these with just lines (makes no sense to do this when you are developing your design in more detail). However, I still use a lot of lines to define features I don't care to model in 3D (shelves I am not going to see in a back storage room when calling for a 3D rendering of a lobby area).

To print floor plan view to pdf file and bring it into Photoshop for further manipulation: in ArchiCAD make sure all fills etc display as vectorial, not bitmap, before printing to pdf or it won't work (the pdf file generates an alpha channel: you can overlay your pdf plan drawing on a raster image in Photoshop to see the raster image behind your plan lines / walls). Importing a pdf in photoshop provides resolution options: size, dpi., etc. Adjust to the size of your final rendering image if producing a plan overlay on a raster image. See Photoshop for Architects (Marcia King has this on reserve for you).

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