



Beyond the noise. Into the DNA.

FREE GUIDE

8 Signs Your Precedent Study Is Just a Description

and the one fix

Check your draft against eight signs in two minutes, then read the one step that fixes all of them.

WHO WE ARE

CRUX makes practical toolkits for architecture and design students. We take the parts of studio work nobody teaches directly – choosing, deciding, defending, finishing – and turn them into methods you can actually follow.

No theory for its own sake. No filler. Tools you fill in, not essays you read.

WHAT WE MAKE

- Decision kits – for the choices that stall a project
- Method guides – for the skills studio assumes you have
- Completion standards – what finished actually looks like
- Review and defence toolkits
- Fill-in worksheets, scorecards and worked examples

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8 Signs Your Precedent Study Is Just a Description

A precedent study — also called a case study or a reference study — earns its week only if something in it can be used in a project that looks nothing like the building. Here is how to tell, in two minutes.

Check your draft against these eight. Three or more, and it is a description.

1. It opens with the architect's biography.

History is context, not analysis. It fills pages and answers nothing.

Fix — Open with the problem the building had to solve.

2. It lists the rooms.

A room list proves you found a plan. It does not prove you read it.

Fix — Trace the route through the plan and say what the plan costs.

3. Every adjective is positive.

"Iconic", "stunning", "masterful" are admiration, and admiration is not transferable.

Fix — Replace each adjective with a move and a reason.

4. There is no section anywhere in it.

Most real decisions — light, level, height, structure — are visible only in section.

Fix — Find a section, or choose a building that has one.

5. Nothing is stated as a rule.

If no sentence works away from the building, nothing has been extracted.

Fix — Write one sentence that never names this building.

6. The climate is never mentioned.

A daylight or shading move without its climate is a move without its condition.

Fix — Name the condition the move depends on.

7. Your own project appears only in the last line.

A precedent study that does not change your design has not done its job.

Fix — Run the Transfer Test and name one design move.

8. Your project came out the same shape as the precedent.

That is copying, and reviewers see it immediately.

Fix — Name the thing you chose not to copy.

None of these means the work is bad. It means the study stopped at what is there, before it reached what you can reuse. The fix is on the next page.

Stop Describing. Start Extracting.

Every one of those eight signs comes from the same missing step. This is the step.



Steps 1–2 read the building. Steps 3–5 make it useful in your project.

Most studies do step 1 and stop. The value starts at step 3, and it takes about an hour.

WHAT A DESCRIPTION SAYS

What is there. Rooms, materials, history, praise. It works only while you are pointing at the building.

WHAT AN ANALYSIS SAYS

Why it works, and what you can reuse. Problem, move, trade-off, rule, condition. It works in a project that looks nothing like the precedent.

DO THIS NOW, ON THE STUDY YOU ALREADY HAVE

Take your strongest observation and write it as a rule that never names this building, this component or this material. Then add the condition it depends on. If you can do that in one sentence, you have a precedent study. If you cannot, you have notes about a building.

WORKED IN ONE LINE

Observation — a raised band of glass runs over the middle of the hall.

Principle — **when a plan is deeper than side light can reach, put the light source above the depth rather than across from the edge.**

Condition — a deep plan, a climate where the extra winter heat loss is manageable, and a roof you can raise.

GET THE FULL VERSION OF THIS KIT

The **Architectural Precedent Study Selection & Application Kit** is the complete method — a documentation-weighted selection scorecard, the fill-in Analysis Map, the Transfer Test, six worked examples and a rescue plan for a study due in 48 hours. 51 pages, 11 tools.

<https://cruxlabstools.com/toolkit/architectural-precedent-study/>



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