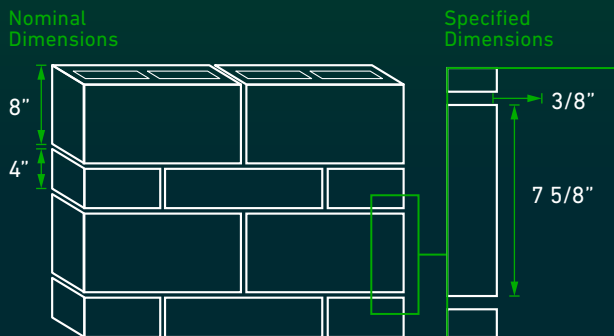


Most people know what a concrete block is, but beyond the standard units used in basements or concealed structural applications, architectural concrete masonry units (CMU) are made to be seen and celebrated. Architectural block provides a diverse selection of bond patterns, colors and finishes — delivering versatility that supports performance requirements and design intent. This block bite reviews the array of aesthetic possibilities available when using architectural concrete masonry.

1. MODULAR COORDINATION



Architectural CMU can be used to construct veneers, non-loadbearing assemblies and structural components of any structure. CMU is made in standardized dimensions to facilitate layout and design. Commonly, nominal face dimensions are 8 inches high by 16 inches long, with half-height (4-inch) units available to achieve brick-like proportions. The length of block can also vary from 8 to 32 inches. Block depth ranges from 4 to 16 inches, depending on wall height and structural requirements.

The specified dimensions of CMU are $\frac{3}{8}$ inches less than the nominal dimensions to accommodate mortar joints. Typically, it is standard practice to use the nominal dimensions in project specifications.

Coordinating walls, doors, and windows in 8-inch modular increments streamlines construction and helps achieve both cost efficiency and refined aesthetics.

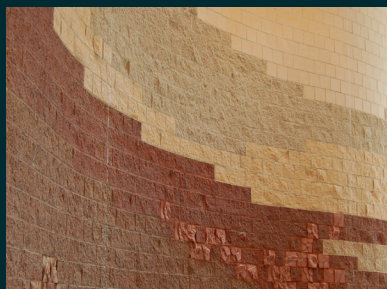
Concrete blocks of all shapes and sizes can be arranged in countless ways to achieve structural performance and unique design effects.

BOND PATTERN



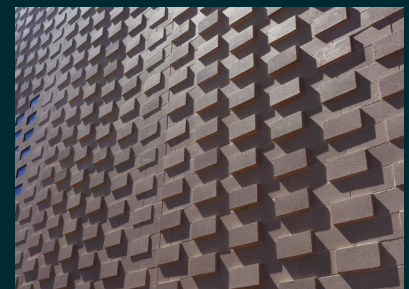
Veneers can incorporate a variety of layouts — from one-third or one-fourth running bonds to ashlar patterns that create balance and visual rhythm through varied unit sizes.

ALIGNMENT



Block walls don't have to be linear — they can be detailed to create curves, angles and unique design geometries.

ORIENTATION



Blocks can be angled or projected outward to create distinctive shadows, textures and visual interest.

2. FINISH

Architectural units can be manufactured in a wide range of colors, textures and finishes to achieve the desired aesthetic, performance and design intent. From subtle treatments to bold expressions, finish selection helps define a project's visual identity. These are some of the standard finishes available for CMU:

Plain	Polished	Slump
Split Face	Glazed	Striated
Sand-Blasted	Molded Face	Scored
Ground/Burnished	Screen Block	Fluted

3. COLOR

Architectural blocks can be produced in a diverse palette of colors by adjusting pigments, cement and aggregate blends. Because CMU is sourced locally, be sure to consult an area producer for available options.

Don't overlook the mortar! Mortar color can also be customized to either blend seamlessly with the block or provide a striking contrast.



Photo provided by: Best Block



Photo provided by: HMFH ARCHITECTS. Courtesy of Ed Wonsek Artworks Inc.

LEARN MORE

- CMHA TEC-001-23 – Concrete Masonry Unit Shapes, Sizes, Properties and Specifications
- CMHA TEK 05-12 – Modular Layout of Concrete Masonry
- CMHA TEK 05-15 – Details for Half-High Concrete Masonry Units

REFERENCES

- ASTM C90 – Standard Specification for Dry-Cast Loadbearing Concrete Masonry Units
- ASTM C1634 – Standard Specification for Dry-Cast Concrete Facing Brick and Other Concrete Masonry Facing Units

For More Information,
Visit [BeautyofBlock.com](https://www.beautyofblock.com)

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