



# First Look: LEED v4 reference guides

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Quick - what's the first thing that comes to mind when you want to understand a credit? The reference guide. It's like the rating system content is your trusty automobile and the reference guide is your owner's manual that helps you figure out how to use everything. In our [last article in this series](#), we took a look at the different online tools that support the LEED v4 reference guides. In this article, we'll take a deeper look at the guides themselves.

## Reference Guides

Just like we did for the LEED Online forms, we used a two-pronged strategy to address the reference guides.

First, we looked at the guides as a whole and how we could make each function better as one full guide, instead of a collection of separate credit-specific explanations. To help with this, we added the following:

- **Getting Started section:** This new segment at the beginning of each guide goes beyond what's found in the introduction and includes a work-plan framework that guides project teams through the steps leading up to certification.
- **Navigation tools:** Information is only helpful if you can find it. Throughout the guides, we've identified connections - so when there is one credit that connects to another, we let you know. If a credit references information in the *Getting Started* section, we let you know that too. Using icons and other wayfinders, we point out relationships so that project teams can benefit from the full picture.

Next, we looked at the credits themselves. Our focus here was on clarity, making sure project teams can quickly and easily see what each credit requires AND how to achieve it. Supporting that goal are several new sections:

- **Step-by-step:** suggests the implementation and documentation steps that can be used by most projects, as well as generally applicable tips and examples
- **Behind the intent:** connects credit achievement with larger sustainability issues and provides general background on the credit requirements
- **Further explanation:** provides additional guidance for lengthy calculations or for special project situations, such as tips for nonstandard project types or credit approaches
- **Related credit tips:** identifies other credits that will affect their decisions and strategies for the credit in question; the relationships between credits may imply synergies or trade-offs
- **Changes from previous versions:** indicates the changes since the last release of the rating system
- **Referenced standards:** lists all standards related to the credit and offers web links to find them

These are just a few of the updates you can expect with LEED v4. We hope you've enjoyed this series and learned more about the tools and resources we've developed to help save project teams time (and money). Voting for LEED v4 is open now through the end of the month for those that registered in April. Don't forget to vote!

Have questions? Learn more about [LEED v4](#) or [email us](#).

### Earlier in this series:

[First Look: LEED v4 Online forms](#)

[First Look: LEED v4 Online forms \(part 2\)](#)

[First Look: Online learning](#)



**Selina Holmes**  
 Manager, LEED Marketing and Communications  
 U.S. Green Building Council



Member employees, USGBC staff

9 comments

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**Fernanda Rivas**  
 When was V.4 released?

17 weeks 2 days ago



**Elizabeth Thompson**  
 LEED Specialist, U.S. Green Building Council

16 weeks 2 days ago

We celebrated the official launch of v4 at Greenbuild 2013.



**Alicia Silva Villanueva**  
 CEO, Revitaliza Consultores  
 Pro Reviewer

37 weeks 22 hours ago

We have now been using the new reference guides and I have to say it is very annoying that the credits don't have number before them it makes it so hard to work with them as the names are so long. Hope USGBC can correct that soon



**Selina Holmes**  
 Manager, LEED Marketing and Communications, U.S. Green Building Council

36 weeks 5 days ago

Hi Alicia, Thanks for the feedback. In developing LEED v4, we found that because of the alignment from one system to the next, the numbers created more confusion than they solved. We tried it a number of different ways and in the end, decided that removing the numbers altogether would be better than the complex system we'd have to implement to make it work. Please keep sending in your thoughts, this helps us as we continue to make improvements.



**Paul Natcher**  
 President, Green Apple Group

1 year 7 weeks ago

After GreenBuild, how do you get a reference guide?



**Barbara King**  
 Is there a date for the first v4 exam yet?

1 year 14 weeks ago



**Alex Zelaya**  
 USGBC / GBCI Customer Service, USGBC Customer Service

49 weeks 4 days ago

The first day to take the exams with the new LEED v4 content will be June 30, 2014. No tests will be administered in between these dates.



**Selina Holmes**  
 Manager, LEED Marketing and Communications, U.S. Green Building Council

1 year 17 weeks ago

Hi Elizabeth. Yes, the guides will be on sale at Greenbuild. That will be their debut.



**Elizabeth Powers**  
 Principal, O'Brien & Company

1 year 17 weeks ago

When do you expect to publish the reference guides? Will they be on sale at GreenBuild? Before?

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