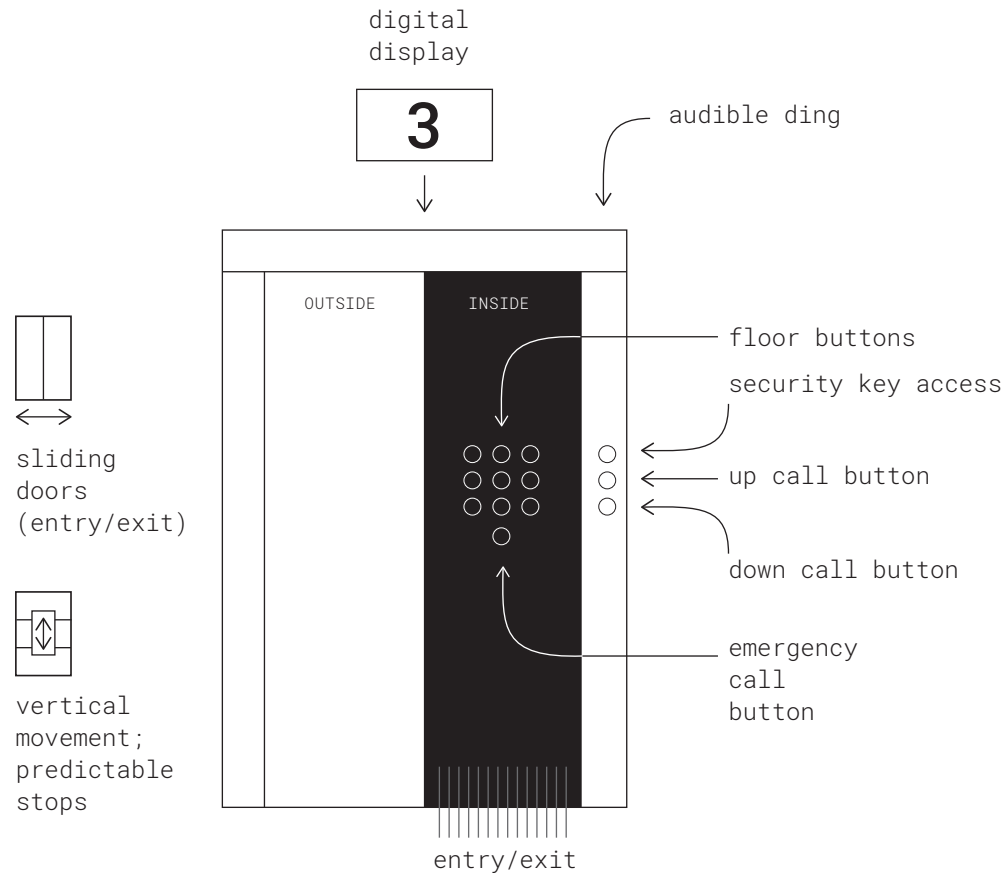


Structural Meaning-Units (SMUs): Elevator

Every structural meaning-unit (SMU) plays a role in how meaning is made. In an elevator, each button, sound, and surface is part of the medium's architecture — shaped by what it enables, what it resists, and where it sits (inside, outside, or in between). This diagram shows how structure communicates through affordances, constraints, and interaction within a designed environment. The final column (Functional/Visual/Temporal/Environmental) offers another way to consider each SMU: how it operates through function, visual form, time, or environment. These categories can overlap and are not intended as a fixed classification system. They are prompts for noticing how different elements shape the experience.



SMU	Affordances (what it allows)	Disaffordances (what it limits)	Site	Functional / Visual / Temporal / Environmental
Up Button	Signals intent to ascend Requests system response	No control over which elevator arrives Cannot choose floor yet	Outside	Functional, Temporal
Down Button	Signals intent to descend Triggers directional behavior	Same as above — no agency over full path	Outside	Functional, Temporal
Digital Display	Communicates current floor Provides orientation for users	Doesn't show future path or stops Information is partial	Outside	Functional, Visual, Temporal
Audible Ding	Alerts arrival Accessible to blind/low-vision users	Non-specific (doesn't clarify direction/floor) Passive indicator	Outside	Functional, Temporal, Environmental
Floor Buttons	Selects destination Personalizes movement within constraints	Cannot re-route or change once pressed Choices limited to predefined floors	Inside	Functional, Visual
Emergency Call Button	Invokes help Offers failsafe option	Only usable in crisis Limited to passive alert (not full communication)	Inside	Functional, Environmental
Security Key Access	Grants or restricts access to private floors	Excludes users without clearance Reinforces hierarchy	Outside	Functional, Visual
Sliding Door Mechanism	Allows safe entry/exit Marks start/end of journey	May close prematurely Gatekeeping function (controls entry)	Threshold	Functional, Visual, Temporal, Environmental
Entry/Exit	Transition zone Perceived change in role (passenger/user)	No clear control over timing or accessibility Can create physical barrier	Threshold	Functional, Visual, Temporal, Environmental