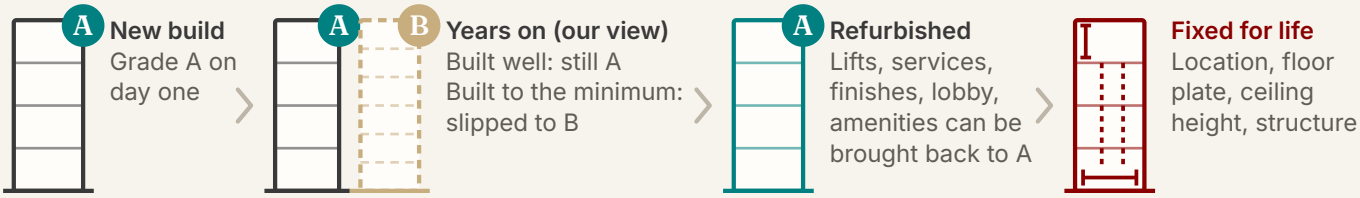
What is a ‘Grade A’ office?

Hotels are graded by a rigid star system with set rules. Offices are not. ‘Grade A’ is a market label with no fixed test and no examiner, so how is a building judged? The columns below set out the key differences between a Grade A office and a Grade B one.

GRADE A top of the market	CRITERION	**GRADE B** good, older, cheaper
Prime district, metro and road links: DIFC, Downtown, Business Bay	**Location**	Secondary district or the edge of the centre; car-first access
New or fully refurbished; premium facade and lobby; to current codes	**Age and construction**	Older, dated design and technology; maintained, not modernised
Large, regular plates (the floor shape), few columns; ceilings about 2.6–2.75 m	**Floor plates and ceilings**	Smaller or awkward plates, more columns, lower ceilings
Fast lifts, enough for the building: short waiting times at peak	**Lifts**	Fewer, slower lifts; queues at peak
High-capacity, zoned cooling and fresh air; full-height glass, daylight	**Air, light and comfort**	Older chillers and air handling; smaller windows; patchy lighting
Certified: LEED, BREEAM or WELL; built to Al Sa'fat, Dubai's green code	**Sustainability**	No certificate, or an old one; higher energy bills; scope to retrofit
Strong parking ratio (bays per floor area), EV charging, visitor bays	**Parking and access**	Adequate parking, few visitor bays; street or paid parking nearby
Fibre, several providers; building management system; back-up power	**Connectivity and technology**	Single provider; standard services, less back-up; occupiers fit their own
Reception, cafes, gym; end-of-trip: showers, lockers, bike storage	**Amenities**	A lobby and little else; amenities nearby or off site
One professional owner; facilities team, security, cleaning on a plan	**Management and ownership**	Many small owners, or absent; repairs only when things break
The highest rent in the market, and the least space to choose from	**Rent and cost**	Cheaper advertised rent; compare it after incentives and service charges

A grade is not for life



Our view: built to a high specification, a tower holds Grade A for longer, because its structure, floor plates, lifts and services stay ahead of the market; built to the minimum, it slips to Grade B sooner. A refurbishment can restore the grade, but location, ceiling height, floor plate and structure cannot be refurbished in: check those first.



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LANGUAGES

ENGLISH · SPANISH

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Sources: Morgan Lovell, Overbury, Oktra; BCO (British Council for Offices) Guide to Specification 2014 (UK figures). LEED, BREEAM, WELL: green and wellbeing certificates.

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