



# Effective Signage Guide

## Be Seen.

Signage is one of the most powerful forms of advertising. Making it effective is part art and part science. A good understanding of the parameters will help you to work with sign designers to craft your message into an effective sign. This guide is intended to give an overview of some of the important considerations that go into designing and purchasing an effective sign.

# Your Target Audience



Every year the amount of visual and audio advertising we are subjected to increases. Our brains compensate for the information overload. This makes it increasingly difficult to get your message seen and, even more importantly, acted on. Traditionally it was believed that physical features determined sign effectiveness such as size, brightness and motion. Recent studies have shown that meaningfulness is the single most important

“Research has shown that meaningfulness is the most important factor in sign effectiveness.”

factor in an effective message. Just as hearing your name in a crowded stadium catches your attention over so many other conversations, a targeted message is most important in developing an effective sign that is conspicuous for your intended audience.

# Don't Say Too Much

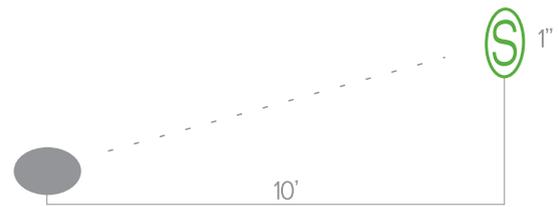


One mistake people often make is they try to put too much information on their sign. Signs with too much information are confusing and don't get read. Prioritize the information you want to put on the sign starting with what is most important and follow the guidelines for letter size readability to see what will reasonably fit on the size of sign you are considering.

## Be Conspicuous.

- ▶ Prioritize your information, don't put too much information on your sign
- ▶ Keep your message simple and concise

# Readability Guidelines



For every 10 feet, increase your letter size by an inch

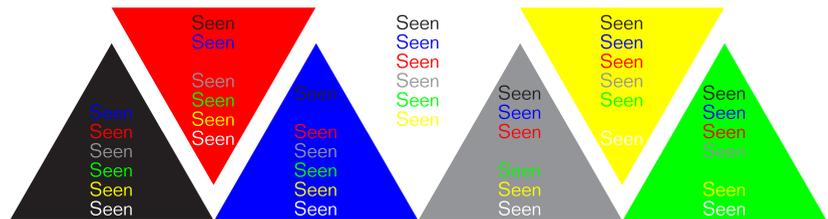
A rule of thumb for text size that will have good impact is 1" letter height for every 10' of viewing distance.

Larger is better. What is the smallest you can go and still be read effectively? The following chart has been developed from data found in a study by the Pennsylvania Highway department recommending the minimum letter height for a viewing distance. It is convenient for determining the minimum size of letters if you know the viewable distance of your sign, or to get an idea of how far away your sign can be read.

## Minimum Letter Height

Viewing Distance	Letter Height	Viewing Distance	Letter Height	Viewing Distance	Letter Height
ft.	in.	ft.	in.	ft.	in.
50	2	400	16	1250	50
100	4	450	18	1320	57
150	6	500	22	1500	59
200	8	525	21	1750	69
250	10	630	25	2000	79
350	14	750	33	2250	89
360	16	1000	43	2500	99

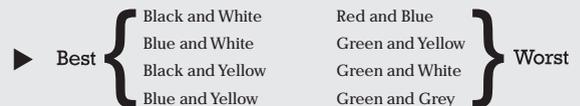
# Color & Contrast



Use of color and contrast can make your sign more attractive and easier to read. The graphic above shows contrast levels for 7 common colors. Background color and ambient light have a significant impact on color appearance. If the sky is your background, grey or silver are a good choice for sign structures. These colors blend in and minimize the visual impact of the structure. A sign background or border with a high contrast to grey will be more conspicuous. Human science experts tell us that when there are more than six colors we have a hard time picking out the individual elements. Therefore, choose the number and use of colors carefully to maximize impact.

## Help The Eye

- ▶ Use strong color brightness contrast
- ▶ Don't use more than 6 colors
- ▶ Background color and ambient light will change the look of your sign
- ▶ Grey and silver disappear into the sky



# Text vs Digital Graphics



Large format digital graphics refer to huge “photograph” quality images. These images can be printed on a variety of different materials. Technology has lowered the prices and increased the quality to the point that graphics are affordable for many applications. They are really transforming the visual landscape. Digital graphics offer tremendous flexibility in merchandising. The product itself doesn't have to be placed where it will be seen. The scale of the picture can be adjusted to suit the viewing distance (think of a large poster of a diamond ring that you can see from 50 feet away). The old saying of a picture is worth a thousand words holds true. Images can grab consumers attention and convey a lifestyle or product message. Digital graphics may not be the most effective if the message can be said clearly in a few words. In this case, text will get the message across more quickly. Large scale pretty pictures may confuse the customer if you are simply directing

## Be Noticed.

- ▶ Large scale digital graphics are affordable for many applications
- ▶ A picture is worth a thousand words
- ▶ Large scale digital graphics are effectively trigger emotional responses
- ▶ If the message can be said clearly in a few words, text will get the message across more quickly
- ▶ Thermal printing is the best choice for exterior or durable durable digital graphics

them to the COSMETICS or TOOLS section of your store. Unless there is an established international symbol in place such as for washrooms, department or directional signage is best done using large clear text.

# Durability of Graphics



The manner in which the image is printed has a significant impact on the durability of the digital graphic sign. Comparing them is like apples and oranges. Thermal printing is the best choice for exterior or durable digital graphics. In this process resin colors are thermally fused into the media making them perfect for long term (5 to 7 year) exterior use or other applications requiring durability. Thermal prints do not require lamination or other finishes and they are ready to be applied as soon as they are finished printing. Generally, this means a faster production of your durable image. In comparison, solvent based printers are also capable of print on the vinyl media that are used for outdoor applications. However, some cleaners can dissolve these images.

Depending on the application, they may need to be laminated to make them suitable or for anything but short term outdoor use. Large format inkjet prints suffer from the same frailties as your desktop inkjet printer. Water or cleaning materials will cause the image to run and the image will fade very quickly. Inkjets must be covered with a laminate for reasonable indoor durability or any exterior application. Be sure the quote includes the lamination or protection required, otherwise a significant additional charge may surprise you. All laminations are not the same; make sure you are getting a UV resistant laminate if it is going outside otherwise it will crack or flake. Also, some laminations do not protect the images from fading. Even the best laminates today still only offer a couple years exterior protection.

# Signs Lifespan

There are many design and material options to promote your message. One way to be sure you get the best value for your dollar is to define how long you want the sign to last. An interior banner for a weekend can be done for less than an exterior banner that is to be suspended outside in the wind and weather for six months. Make sure you discuss the intended life with a sign professional and allow them to explain the options for your needs. Exterior sign boxes or letters made of aluminum will last indefinitely. Sheet steel boxes or letters will last proportionally to the quality of finish before they start to rust. Any steel sign will eventually rust and must be refinished or replaced to keep an attractive appearance. The sun's rays damage signs more than wet or cold. There are many different types of attractive plastics available today. If you are going to be using a plastic sign outside ask how it will stand up to the sun's UV rays. Some will last longer than others. Shabby signs give a poorer impression than



## Value Over Time

- ▶ Tell the sign company how long the sign needs to last
- ▶ Use low maintenance materials for long duration signs
- ▶ Replace or refurbish shabby or obsolete signs
- ▶ Look for a warranty on your sign

no sign. Make sure your sign is maintained or have it replaced. If it has deteriorated and no longer serves a purpose have it removed. Quality signs will look good for the intended life with little or no maintenance. A warranty is good protection for you and a strong indication of the confidence a company has in the quality of its products.

# Potential Liability

As with any other type of work, when someone sets foot on your property to perform a service, you become open to a potential liability. Very small companies are not required to carry workers compensation and therefore liability for an accident can possibly fall on your shoulders. Always use companies whose employees are covered by workers compensation. The province of Nova Scotia requires companies who install signs to have current certification in the Nova Scotia Construction Safety Association (NSCSA). NSCSA ensures companies have safety policies, procedures and trained workers. Ask if the sign companies you are considering are NSCSA certified members. The better sign companies will be pleased to tell you about the experience levels and training of their employees. You should deal with companies that carry general liability insurance of at least \$2 million dollars to protect you from any



## Be Safe.

- ▶ Hire only Workman's Compensation covered employees.
- ▶ NSCSA ensures the company follows proper safety procedures and training.
- ▶ Make sure companies have at least \$2 million dollar in general liability insurance.

accident on your property. A company must carry garage policy insurance to protect your vehicle while it is in a shop for something as simple as lettering or graphics. Don't be shy to ask for proof that you will be adequately protected by their insurance.

# Be Seen.



21 Raddall Avenue

Dartmouth, NS

B3B 1L4

[www.UnitedSign.ca](http://www.UnitedSign.ca)

**902 468 6161**