SUI CREATIVE

ADA REGULATIONS & DESIGN GUIDELINES
FOR ARCHITECTS & INTERIOR DESIGNERS

A VISUAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE LAWS



ADA GUIDELINES | SIGN DRAWINGS | ADA MOUNTING | STANDARD COLORS

WELCOME

This guide was developed to break down the complexities of ADA sign regulations into a clear and easy-to-understand format. We know that navigating these requirements can be challenging, especially when dealing with technical language and legal standards. Our goal is to simplify the information so that anyone—from designers to project managers—can confidently apply ADA signage guidelines to their projects.

Because signage is a visual medium, we took a more visual approach in presenting this information. Rather than relying solely on text-heavy explanations, this guide incorporates graphics, examples, and structured layouts to make the learning process more intuitive. Whether you're new to ADA compliance or just need a refresher, this guide is designed to be a practical resource that helps you understand and implement the regulations with confidence.



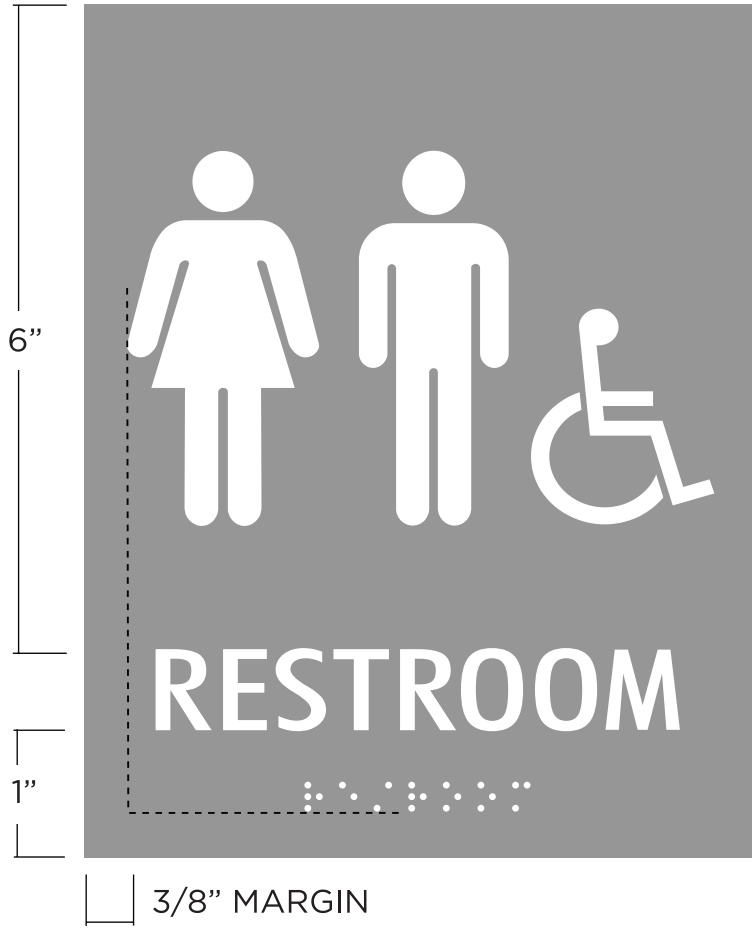


TABLE OF CONTENTS

ADA SIGN SUMMARY 04
ADA SIGN TYPES 05
FINISH & CONTRAST/LETTERING FONT..... 06
PICTOGRAMS & SYMBOLS 07
BRAILLE REQUIREMENTS 08
SPACING REQUIREMENTS 09
CHARACTER PROPORTIONS 10
CHARACTER HEIGHTS 11
SIGN SIZING CHART 12
ADA MOUNTING 13
ADA MOUNTING EXCEPTIONS 14
STANDARD COLORS 15
GRAPHIC OPTIONS 16
MOUNTING OPTIONS 17

ADA SIGN SUMMARY

The following ten rules apply to signs that identify a permanent room or space. While informational and directional signs do not require Braille, they must still comply with many of the other guidelines outlined below. For a full understanding of ADA sign requirements, please review the entire guide.



1. Signs that identify a room, space or area shall have raised characters and braille. (216.2) (703.1)
2. Signs shall have a non-glare finish with contrasting colors. (703.6.2)
3. Pictograms shall be in their own 6” high field. Add the ISA symbol if accessible. (703.6.1)
4. Characters shall be Sans Serif and all Uppercase. (703.2.3) (703.2.2)
5. Characters must be between 5/8” and 2” with a minimum of 1/8” spacing. (703.2.5) (703.2.7)
6. Font shall be ADA compliant. Not too bold, condensed, italic, etc. (703.2.4) (703.2.6)
7. 3/8” Minimum margin is required all around raised elements including Braille. (703.2.7)
8. 1” High space is required for one line of Braille. (703.3.2)
9. Braille shall be all together and 3/8” to 1/2” below last line of text. (703.3.2)
10. ADA signs are required for both public access areas and all employee areas. (216.2)

ADA SIGN TYPES

ADA regulations categorize signs into four basic types. The matrix below provides a quick overview of the key requirements for each. For a detailed breakdown of additional rules and regulations, we recommend reading this entire guide.

IDENTIFICATION	INFORMATIONAL	DIRECTIONAL	OVERHEAD SIGNS
			
SIGNS THAT IDENTIFY A ROOM, SPACE OR AREA.	SIGNS THAT PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT A ROOM, SPACE OR AREA.	SIGNS THAT PROVIDE DIRECTION TO A ROOM, SPACE OR AREA.	WALL, CEILING AND PROJECT TYPE SIGNS MOUNTED OVERHEAD.
SIGN FINISH: NON-GLARE	**SIGN FINISH:** NON-GLARE	**SIGN FINISH:** NON-GLARE	**SIGN FINISH:** NON-GLARE
SIGN COLORS: GOOD CONTRASTING COLORS	**SIGN COLORS:** GOOD CONTRASTING COLORS	**SIGN COLORS:** GOOD CONTRASTING COLORS	**SIGN COLORS:** GOOD CONTRASTING COLORS
BRAILLE REQUIRED: YES	**BRAILLE REQUIRED:** NO	**BRAILLE REQUIRED:** NO	**BRAILLE REQUIRED:** NO
RAISED LETTERING: YES	**RAISED LETTERING:** NOT REQUIRED	**RAISED LETTERING:** NOT REQUIRED	**RAISED LETTERING:** NOT REQUIRED
LETTERING FONT: SANS SERIF	**LETTERING FONT:** SIMPLE OR SANS SERIF	**LETTERING FONT:** SIMPLE OR SANS SERIF	**LETTERING FONT:** SIMPLE OR SANS SERIF
LETTERING HEIGHT: 5/8" TO 2"	**LETTERING HEIGHT:** MINIMUM 5/8"	**LETTERING HEIGHT:** MINIMUM 5/8"	**LETTERING HEIGHT:** MINIMUM 2"
LETTER CASE: ALL UPPERCASE	**LETTER CASE:** UPPER AND/OR LOWER	**LETTER CASE:** UPPER AND/OR LOWER	**LETTER CASE:** UPPER AND/OR LOWER
PICTOGRAMS: YES	**PICTOGRAMS:** NO SPECIFIC REQUIREMENT	**PICTOGRAMS:** NO SPECIFIC REQUIREMENT	**PICTOGRAMS:** NO SPECIFIC REQUIREMENT
LINE SPACING: 35-70% OF LETTER HEIGHT	**LINE SPACING:** 35-70% OF LETTER HEIGHT	**LINE SPACING:** 35-70% OF LETTER HEIGHT	**LINE SPACING:** 35-70% OF LETTER HEIGHT
LETTER SPACING: 1/8" TO 4X OF STROKE	**LETTER SPACING:** 10 TO 35% OF STROKE	**LETTER SPACING:** 10 TO 35% OF STROKE	**LETTER SPACING:** 10 TO 35% OF STROKE
LETTER STROKE: 15% MAX OF STROKE	**LETTER STROKE:** 10 TO 30% OF STROKE	**LETTER STROKE:** 10 TO 30% OF STROKE	**LETTER STROKE:** 10 TO 30% OF STROKE
MOUNTING: SEE PAGE 12	**MOUNTING:** NO SPECIFIC REQUIREMENT	**MOUNTING:** NO SPECIFIC REQUIREMENT	**MOUNTING:** MIN CLEARANCE 80"

FINISH & CONTRAST

All ADA sign types must have a non-glare finish with good contrast between the background color and the character color. See page 15 for standard color combinations that meet ADA guidelines.

ADA COMPLIANT	NOT COMPLIANT
 NON-GLARE MATERIAL	 GLOSS MATERIAL

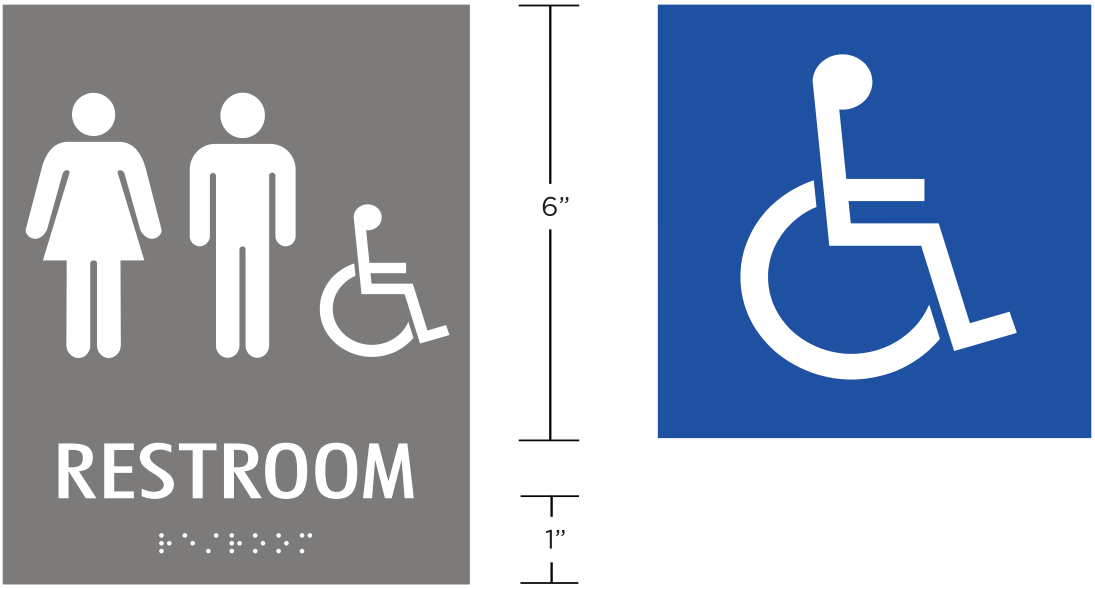
LETTERING FONTS

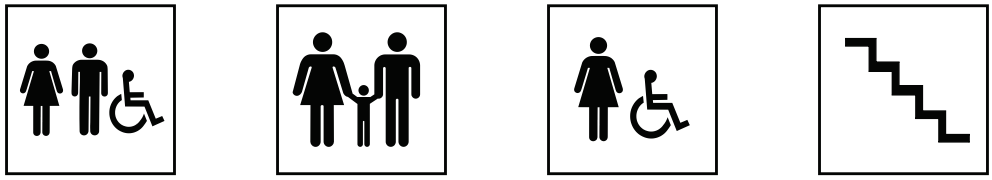
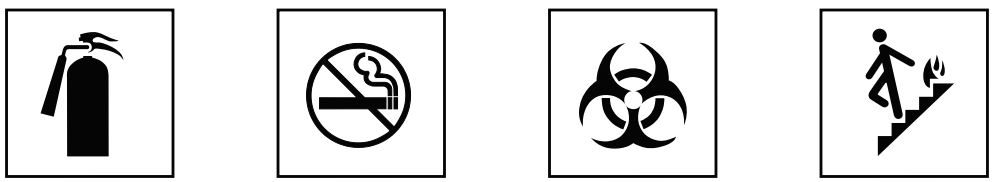
Fonts must be sans-serif, meaning they have clean, straight lines without decorative strokes or "feet" at the ends of letters. They must not be italic, oblique, script, or decorative. Informational or directional signs may use a simple serif font.

ADA COMPLIANT	NOT COMPLIANT
ARIAL MEDIUM HELVETICA LATO MEDIUM MONTSERRAT ROBOTO MEDIUM TREBUCHET	TIMES NEW ROMAN GEORGIA GARAMOND BASKERVILLE PALATINO DIDOT

PICTOGRAMS AND SYMBOLS

The chart below shows when pictograms are required and their sizes. Pictograms identifying a room or space must be within a minimum 6” high field, with no other elements in this space. There are no specific rules on pictogram height. Corresponding text with braille must be directly below.

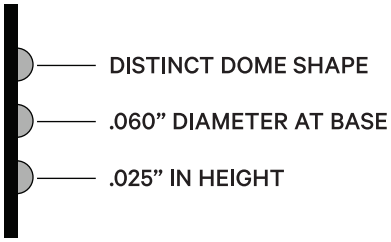
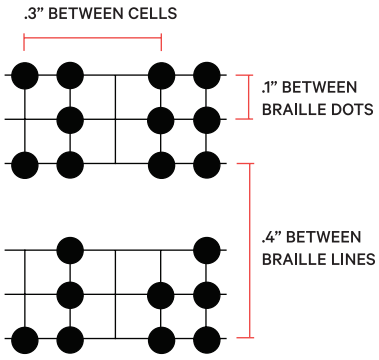
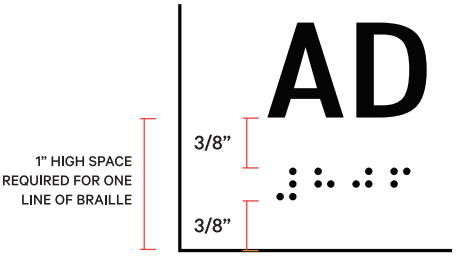


REQUIRED PICTOGRAMS. 6” FIELD REQUIRED.	
ROOM ID PICTOGRAMS ARE NOT REQUIRED, BUT RECOMMENDED IF USED, MUST BE IN 6” HIGH FIELD.	
PICTOGRAMS ARE NOT REQUIRED, BUT RECOMMENDED. NO FIELD HEIGHT REQUIREMENT.	

BRAILLE REQUIREMENTS

Braille must be domed, precisely sized, and Grade II. It should be 3/8” to 1/2” below raised text and grouped under the last line on multiline signs. Lowercase is required, except for proper names, acronyms, and single letters in numbers.

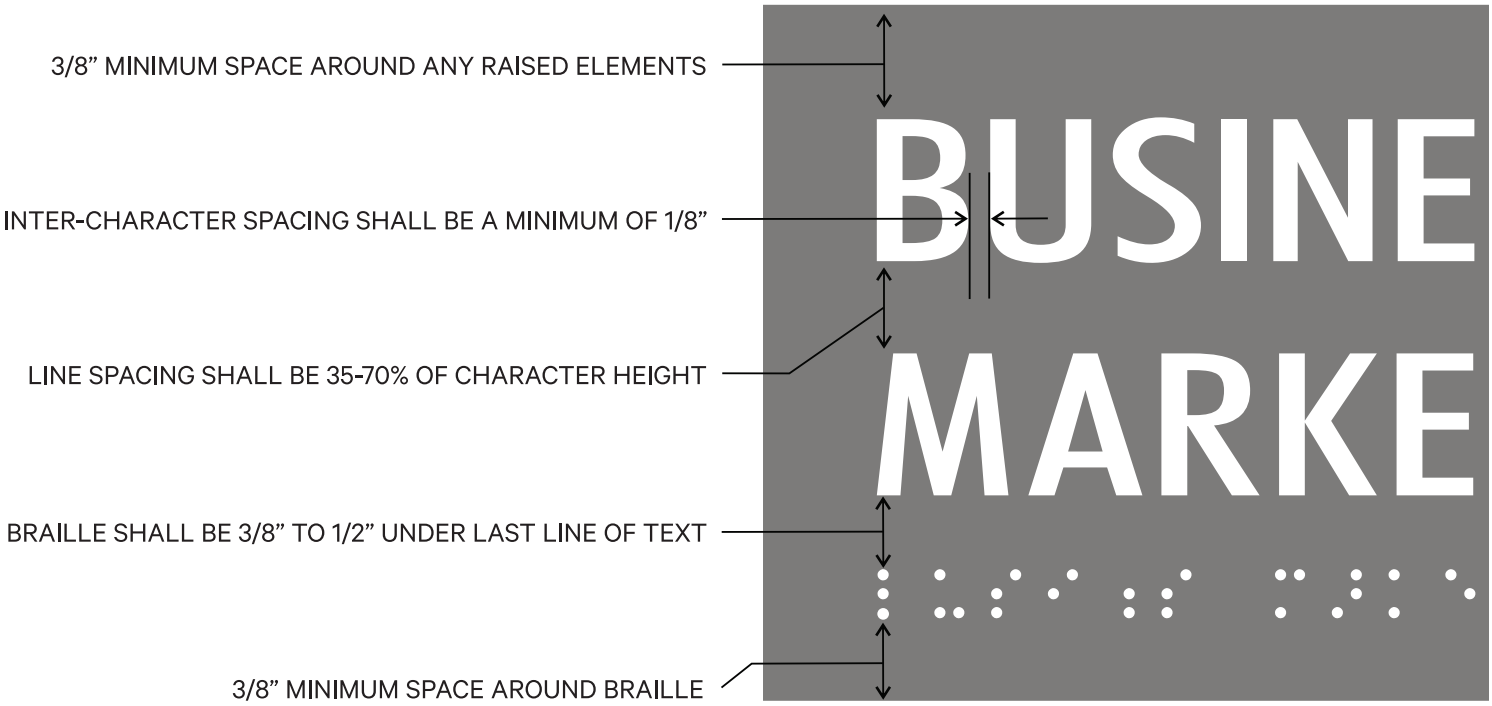
ADA COMPLIANT	NOT COMPLIANT
	
	

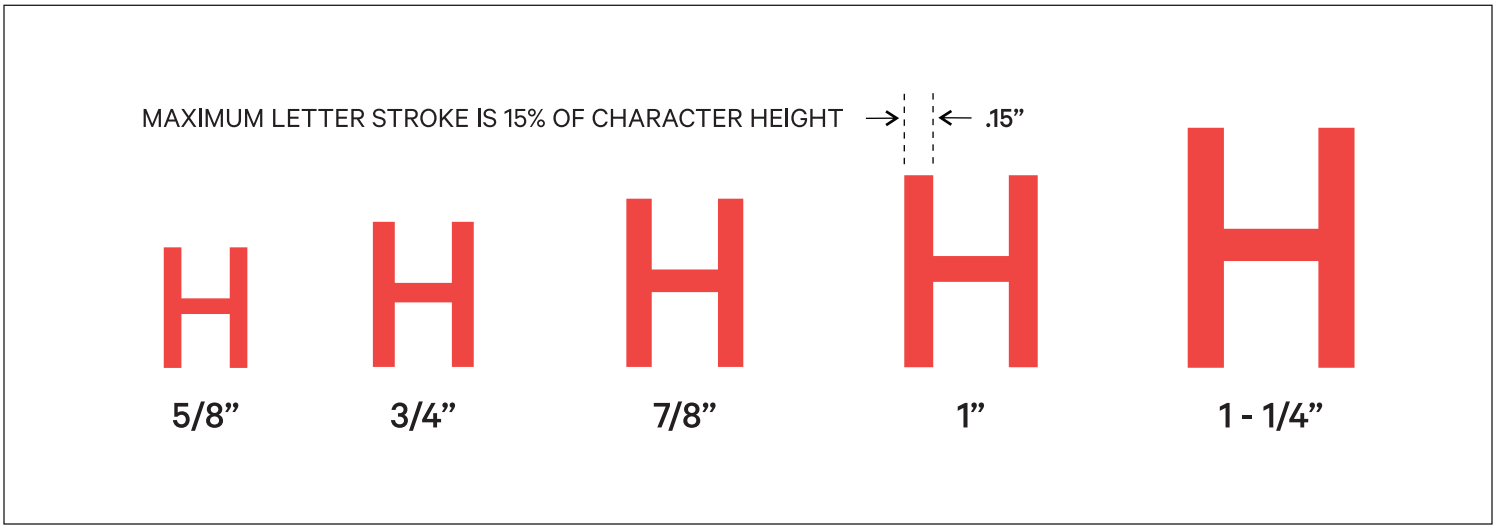
BRAILLE SIZE	BRAILLE SPACING	BRAILLE SIZE
		

SPACING REQUIREMENTS

Proper spacing and margins are important for anyone who needs to feel or touch a sign. Below are the sizing and spacing requirements for tactile and Braille signs that identify rooms, spaces, or areas.

DRAWINGS SHOWN AT ACTUAL SIZE (100% SCALE)





ADA sets a minimum letter height of 5/8”, but studies show this is often too small to read. A minimum of 3/4” is recommended for better accessibility.

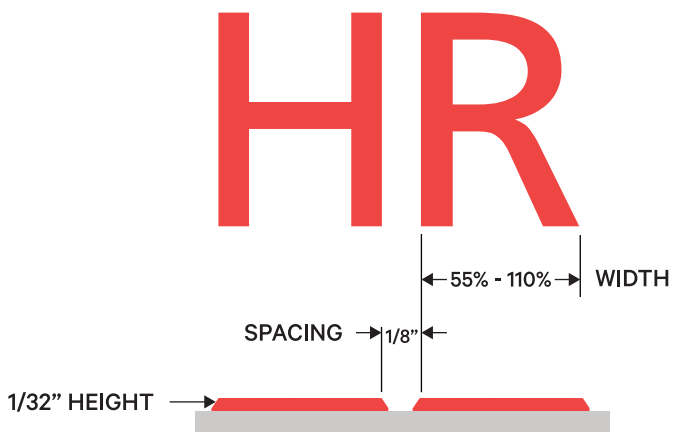
CHARACTER PROPORTIONS

Characters must be spaced and sized properly for any tactile and Braille sign to be compliant. Below is a good example of proper character proportions and spacing, followed by examples of layouts with compliance issues.

TACTILE FONT CHARACTER SPACING & HEIGHT

The distance between characters on tactile copy must be a minimum of 1/8” and a maximum of 4 times the character stroke width. These distances are measured between the closest points of adjacent characters.

Text must be uppercase and raised at least 1/32”

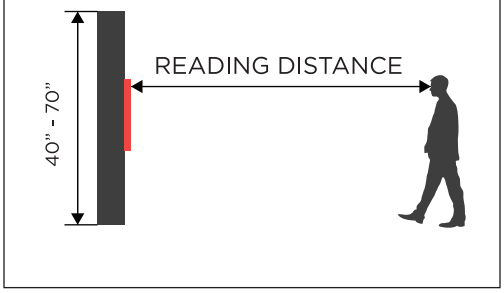


EXAMPLE	COMPLIANCE ISSUE	ADA RULE
SIGNAGE	NOT ENOUGH CHARACTER SPACING	MINIMUM 1/8” SPACE BETWEEN CHARACTERS
S I G N A G E	TOO MUCH CHARACTER SPACING	MAXIMUM SPACE OF 4X CHARACTER STROKE
SIGNAGE	CHARACTERS TOO CONDENSED	MINIMUM WIDTH IS 55% OF CHARACTER HEIGHT
SIGNAGE	CHARACTERS TOO EXTENDED	MAXIMUM WIDTH IS 110% OF CHARACTER HEIGHT
SIGNAGE	CHARACTERS STROKE TOO THICK	MAXIMUM STROKE IS 15% OF CHARACTER HEIGHT

CHARACTER HEIGHTS

Use this chart to determine the required letter size for your sign. First, determine the mounting height of the sign and then the average distance from which someone will be reading it. The maximum character height for room signs is 2".

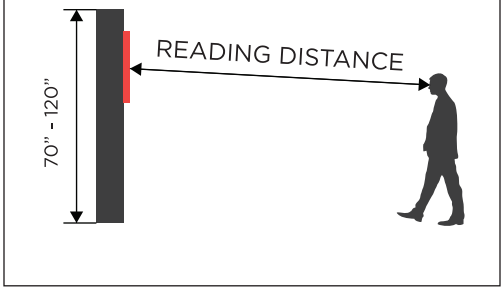
SIGN MOUNTED BETWEEN 40" - 70"



VIEWING DISTANCE:	UNDER 6 FEET	7 FEET	8-9 FEET	10-11 FEET	12-13 FEET	14-15 FEET
MINIMUM LETTER HEIGHT:	5/8"	3/4"	1"	1.25"	1.5"	1.75"

VIEWING DISTANCE:	16-17 FEET	18-19 FEET	20-21 FEET	22-23 FEET	24-25 FEET	26-27 FEET
MINIMUM LETTER HEIGHT:	2"	2.25"	2.5"	2.75"	3"	3.25"

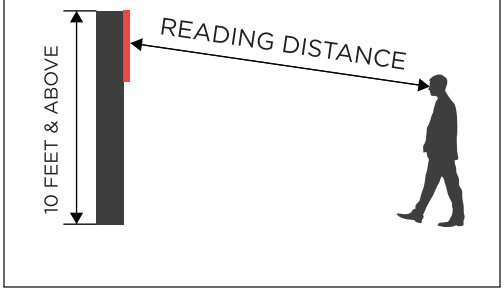
SIGN MOUNTED BETWEEN 70" - 120"



VIEWING DISTANCE:	UNDER 15 FEET	16-17 FEET	18-19 FEET	20-21 FEET	22-23 FEET	24-25 FEET
MINIMUM LETTER HEIGHT:	2"	2.25"	2.5"	2.75"	3"	3.25"

VIEWING DISTANCE:	26-27 FEET	28-29 FEET	30-31 FEET	32-33 FEET	34-35 FEET	36-37 FEET
MINIMUM LETTER HEIGHT:	3.5"	3.75"	4"	4.25"	5"	4.75"

SIGN MOUNTED OVER 120" (10 FEET)



VIEWING DISTANCE:	UNDER 21 FEET	22-23 FEET	24-25 FEET	26-27 FEET	28-29 FEET	30-31 FEET
MINIMUM LETTER HEIGHT:	3"	3.25"	3.5"	3.75"	4"	4.25"

VIEWING DISTANCE:	32-33 FEET	34-35 FEET	36-37 FEET	38-39 FEET	40-41 FEET	42-45 FEET
MINIMUM LETTER HEIGHT:	4.5"	4.75"	5"	5.25"	5.5"	6"

SIGN SIZING CHART

Use this chart to determine the proper size of your tactile and braille sign based on ADA regulations. First, select your letter size (3/4" recommended). Then, count the characters and spaces in the longest line of text. Find your sign length below, based on letter height.

SIGN LENGTH SIZING GUIDE

5/8" LETTER HEIGHT:	
4 CHARACTERS:	3"
5 CHARACTERS:	4"
6 CHARACTERS:	4"
7 CHARACTERS:	5"
8 CHARACTERS:	5"
9 CHARACTERS:	6"
10 CHARACTERS:	6"
11 CHARACTERS:	7"
12 CHARACTERS:	7"
13 CHARACTERS:	8"
14 CHARACTERS:	8"
15 CHARACTERS:	9"
16 CHARACTERS:	9"
17 CHARACTERS:	10"
18 CHARACTERS:	10"
19 CHARACTERS:	11"
20 CHARACTERS:	11"
21 CHARACTERS:	11"
22 CHARACTERS:	12"

3/4" LETTER HEIGHT:	
4 CHARACTERS:	4"
5 CHARACTERS:	4"
6 CHARACTERS:	5"
7 CHARACTERS:	6"
8 CHARACTERS:	6"
9 CHARACTERS:	7"
10 CHARACTERS:	7"
11 CHARACTERS:	8"
12 CHARACTERS:	8"
13 CHARACTERS:	9"
14 CHARACTERS:	10"
15 CHARACTERS:	10"
16 CHARACTERS:	11"
17 CHARACTERS:	11"
18 CHARACTERS:	12"
19 CHARACTERS:	12"
20 CHARACTERS:	13"
21 CHARACTERS:	13"
22 CHARACTERS:	14"

1" LETTER HEIGHT:	
4 CHARACTERS:	5"
5 CHARACTERS:	6"
6 CHARACTERS:	6"
7 CHARACTERS:	7"
8 CHARACTERS:	8"
9 CHARACTERS:	8"
10 CHARACTERS:	9"
11 CHARACTERS:	10"
12 CHARACTERS:	11"
13 CHARACTERS:	12"
14 CHARACTERS:	12"
15 CHARACTERS:	13"
16 CHARACTERS:	14"
17 CHARACTERS:	15"
18 CHARACTERS:	15"
19 CHARACTERS:	16"
20 CHARACTERS:	16"
21 CHARACTERS:	17"
22 CHARACTERS:	17"

SIGN HEIGHT SIZING GUIDE

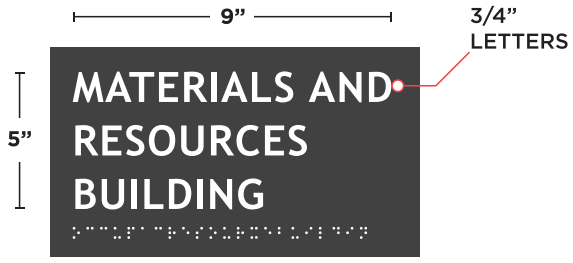
5/8" LETTER HEIGHT:	
1 LINE*	2"
2 LINES*	3"
3 LINES*	4"
4 LINES*	5"
5 LINES*	6"
6 LINES*	8"
7 LINES*	9"

3/4" LETTER HEIGHT:	
1 LINE*	3"
2 LINES*	4"
3 LINES*	5"
4 LINES*	6"
5 LINES*	7"
6 LINES*	9"
7 LINES*	10"

1" LETTER HEIGHT:	
1 LINE*	3"
2 LINES*	4"
3 LINES*	6"
4 LINES*	8"
5 LINES*	9"
6 LINES*	11"
7 LINES*	13"

*EXCLUDING BRAILLE

EXAMPLE



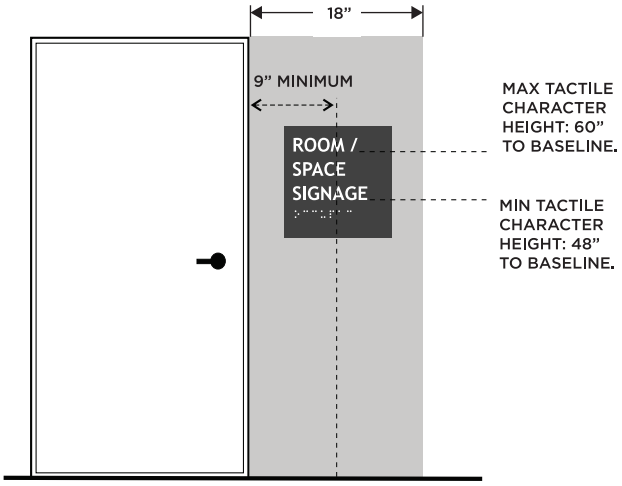
SIGN LENGTH: 13 CHARACTERS & SPACES (LONGEST LINE) = 9"

SIGN HEIGHT: 3 LINES OF RAISED TEXT = 5"

MOUNTING

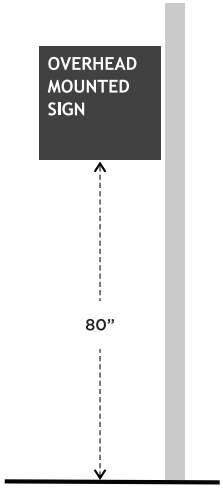
Below are general regulations for mounting room and overhead signage. Be sure to check your state and local codes, as well as consult your building inspector, before installing any sign.

ROOM SIGN MOUNTING



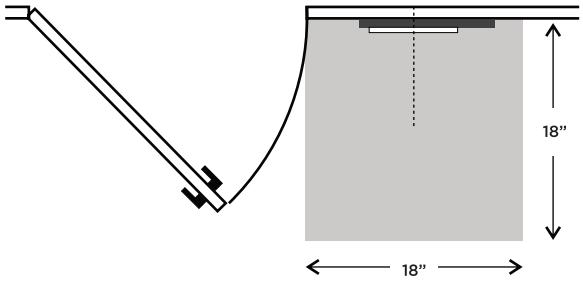
- Center sign between an 18” minimum area and the center of the tactile characters.
- Maximum height of tactile characters is 60” above floor to baseline of characters.
- Minimum height of tactile characters is 48” above floor to baseline of characters.
- Room sign to be mounted on the latch side of the door.
- On double doors, with both leafs active, the sign shall be mounted on the right side.
- When there is not enough wall space for mounting the sign, use the nearest adjacent wall.

CEILING & WALL PROJECTION SIGNS



- Ceiling or wall projection signs must have a minimum clearance of 80” from bottom of sign to the floor.

TACTILE SIGN CLEARANCE



- Provide at least 18” of clear floor space, centered on tactile characters, beyond the door swing arc (closed to 45° open).

ADA MOUNTING EXCEPTIONS

This section covers proper ADA sign placement at doors, including requirements for single and double doors. It explains where to mount tactile signs based on door type, latch position, and available wall space to ensure compliance with ADA standards.



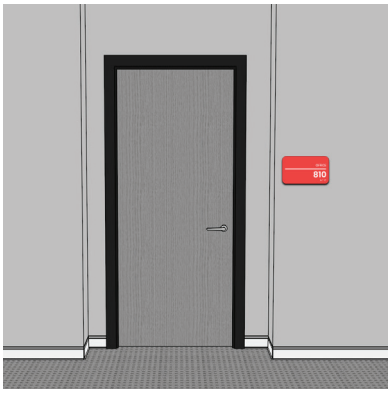
At single doors, tactile signs must be located alongside the door on the latch side.



Place signs on the push side of doors with closers, only if they do not have hold-open devices.



Recessed door with space for latch side placement.



If there is no wall space on the latch side, signs must be located on the nearest adjacent wall.



For double-leaf doors with one active leaf, the sign must be located on the inactive leaf.



If each door has an active leaf, the sign must be located to the right of the door.

STANDARD COLORS

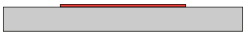
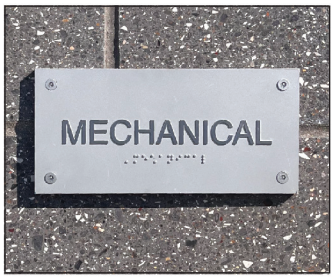
Below are color combinations that meet ADA contrast guidelines. Numbers in parentheses indicate close PMS equivalents, though not exact. Additional color combinations and custom colors are available. Actual colors may vary from those shown below.

01 B&W	02 (PMS 422)	03 (PMS 416)	04 (PMS 7540)	05 (PMS 7540)	06 WHITE ON BLACK	07 ASH ON BLACK
08 GRAY ON BLACK	09 SILVER ON BLACK	10 (PMS 7527)	11 (PMS 7527)	12 (PMS 4685)	13 (PMS 4685)	14 (PMS 7528)
15 (PMS 468)	16 (PMS 411)	17 (PMS 411)	18 (PMS 7504)	19 (PMS 410)	20 (PMS 412)	21 (PMS 412)
22 (PMS 5555)	23 (PMS 5477)	24 (PMS 5477)	25 (PMS 5535)	26 (PMS 5535)	27 (PMS 348)	28 (PMS 562)
29 (PMS 561)	30 (PMS 5473)	31 (PMS 5405)	32 (PMS 285)	33 (PMS 7462)	34 (PMS 7462)	35 (PMS 654)
36 (PMS 187)	37 (PMS 1807)	38 (PMS 4995)	39 (PMS 209)	40 (PMS 209)	41 (PMS 877)	42 (PMS 877)
43 (PMS 464)	44 (PMS 4294)	45 (PMS 4294)	46 (PMS 1665)	47 WHITE ON CLEAR	48 BROWN ON CLEAR	49 BLACK ON CLEAR

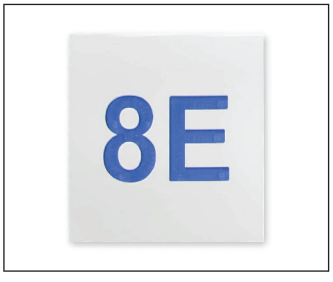
GRAPHIC OPTIONS

Below are the graphic methods we use to manufacture our signs. Signs identifying a room or space must have raised letters and Braille. Informational and directional signs can be made with either subsurface or raised graphics.

FIRST SURFACE | MAIN GRAPHIC ELEMENTS ARE ON THE FRONT SURFACE OF THE MATERIAL.

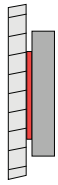
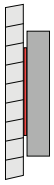
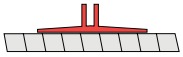
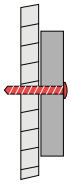
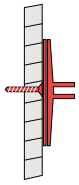
PRECISION CUT	PHOTOPOLYMER	DIRECT PRINT	VINYL
			
Precision cut raised lettering and graphics are bonded to the surface with 3M VHB. Braille is embedded into the surface.	A light-activated resin that changes its properties when it is exposed to UV light. Raised lettering and braille are formed from the material during this process.	Graphics and text are printed directly onto the front of the sign material, creating a crisp, high-quality finish that is durable and smooth.	High performance vinyl is cut to exact specifications and then applied to the front of the material.
			

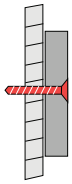
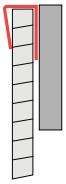
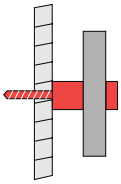
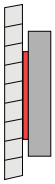
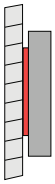
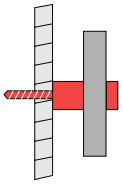
SUBSURFACE | GRAPHICS ARE PRODUCED ON THE BACKSIDE OF THE MATERIAL

ROUTED	LASER ETCHED	PRINTED	VINYL
			
Lettering is routed out from the backside of special two ply material, then backsprayed a contrasting color.	Text and graphics are engraved from the back and filled with paint for contrast.	A full color, high resolution image is printed on the backside of non-glare acrylic.	High performance vinyl is applied to the backside of non-glare acrylic then backsprayed a contrasting color.
			

MOUNTING OPTIONS

Shown below are a few available mounting options. Always test the appropriate mounting method before installation. We recommend using a high-quality silicone adhesive in conjunction with most of the mounting methods listed.

DOUBLE FACED TAPE - WHITE	DOUBLE FACED TAPE - RED	COUNTER BRACKET	SCREW HOLE / TORXS	WALL OR CIELING BRACKET	SNAP LOCKS
					
1/16” Pressure Sensitve Foam Tape. Good in conjunction with silicone adhesive.	Thin High Bond tape for permanent mounting on smooth flat surfaces.	Available in Black or Satin Silver in 8”, 10” and 12”. Accommodates 1/8” material. SIgn should be no taller than 12” in height.	3/16” Screw holes with optional 1-1/2” #8 vandal resistan button head torx screws.	Available in Black or Satin Silver in 6”. 9” amd 11”. Custom lengths available. Accomodates 1/8” material.	Plastic Snap Locls fit securely into holes places into a backer panel or frame. Panels can be removed when necessary.

COUNTERSUNK HOLES / TORXS	PARTITION HOOK	STANDOFFS - PREMIUM	MAGNETIC TAPE	VELCRO HOOK	STANDOFFS - ECONOMY
					
3/16” Screw holes with optional 1-1/2” #8 vandal resistant flathead torx screws.	3.5” Clear Plastic Hanger. Good for a partiotion width of 1.75 - 2.25”. Custom sizes are available.	5/8” Cap with a 3/4” Barrel or 3/4” Cap with a 1” Barrel Material thickness up to 1/4”. Available in Satin Silver.	1/32” tape for steel surfaces. Sign not to exceed three lbs. (18 x 18”)	For fabric surfaces such as office partiotions. Always test compatibility with fabric first.	1/2” Cap with a 3/4” Barrel or 3/4” Cap with a 1” Barrel. Material thickness up to 1/4”. Available in Stain Silver or Black.


23B