



SIGNS OF SUCCESS

Learn the techniques of effective sign-making to advance your cause or campaign.



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Institute

Training Conservatives Since 1979



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SIGNS OF SUCCESS



Why learn the hard way by making the same mistakes others have made?

Learn the techniques of effective sign making to advance your cause or campaign.

Good signs multiply the effect of any demonstration.

With good signs you can:

- Draw attention to what would otherwise be only a group of people
- Make clear the purpose of your demonstration
- Persuade people to agree with you
- Show people you are bright and clever
- Embarrass your opponents
- Raise issues people might otherwise not think about
- Attract valuable print and broadcast media coverage
- Prevent the media from miscasting your protest
- Maintain your cause's message



Good signs must be:



Well-Worded

The wording on each sign should be forceful, clever, emotion-packed, persuasive, or funny.



Brief and to the point

Too many words make a sign hard to read, hard to understand, and unattractive to photograph.



The Right Size

- Signs too big are hard to carry and block the people who carry them. Signs too small do not draw attention.
- Make your signs proportionate to the people who carry them. Signs held without a stake (by both hands) can be larger than signs carried on stakes.



Legible to passersby and photographers

- Leave sufficient margins, right and left, top and bottom.
- Letters must be thick enough to be read easily and show up well in photos and video coverage.
- Use dark letters on white backgrounds. Single strokes of felt-tipped pens are hard to read. Bold letters work best.
- Use upper and lower cases. Long text in CAPS is ineffective because it is difficult to read.
- Avoid designs that contain photos, symbols, or logos.
- Handmade signs will set you apart from your opponent's boring, printed placards.

✓ HELPFUL TIPS

You can outline block letters lightly in pencil and then fill in the outlines with black or dark-colored Magic Markers.

You can have your sign lettered with a one-inch-wide paintbrush by someone skilled. Use tempera or other quick-drying paint.

Good signs must be:



Made of the right materials

- Signs affixed to stakes should be on poster board that will not bend or curl.
- Always use white or very light-colored paper with black or dark-colored lettering.
- Stakes for carrying signs should have flat sides for stability when fastened to the sign.
- Print a banner (carried on long poles, with a person holding each pole) on a long strip of cloth or canvas. A paper banner tears easily.



Good signs must be:



Made with different wordings

- Good signs, differently worded, can make your effort more interesting and photogenic.
- A variety of different signs will hold attention longer.
- Keep all your signs on message. Do not try to address multiple, unrelated issues at one demonstration.
- Passersby and the media will want to read all the messages on your signs.
- In rare cases, multiple copies of one effective sign can make your point.

✓ HELPFUL TIPS

Drugstores, office supply stores, and quick-printing services sell suitable poster boards.

Paint stores and hobby stores sell different kinds of quick-drying paint.

Home improvement stores and lumberyards sell stakes.



Good signs must be:



Media-ready

- Notify the media before any event at which you intend to use signs. Media coverage multiplies the effectiveness of any good rally.
- Contact the media about your upcoming activity.
- Prepare for media interviews. Think of two or three concise talking points that encompass your group's position.
- The most common question is, "Why are you here today?" A good response advances your group's position.
- Assign one or two people to speak on behalf of your group to avoid mischaracterization of your group's views.



Good signs must be:



Carried by the right people

- Signs carried by photogenic people get more favorable attention and more news coverage. You don't have to be beautiful or handsome, although that can help.
- If you are a student, dress like a student.
- Make extra signs. A passerby who agrees with your cause may stop to join you.



Displayed in the right place at the right time

- Always position your signs in full view of the camera. Put them behind speakers or facing interviewers. This is an easy way to ensure your position is seen by a larger audience.
- Banners work if you have a crowd of supporters, but not if you have only a few demonstrators. Banners also work in parades.
- If your sign's wording is clever, carry it with a constant, genuine smile.
- If your sign is seriously critical, keep a serious expression. You never want to look like you have lost your temper.
- Issues spontaneously arise like a wave. You do not have to create every issue or event to earn quality media coverage for your cause.

Ride the wave of news coverage by holding an event or rally surrounding a current event.

WHAT DETERMINES A GOOD SIGN'S VALUE?

Your sign's value is similar to real estate. It is all about location, location, and location. Plus timing.

Positive signs at your events can greatly increase the likelihood of good media coverage.

Signs held in front of your opposition's headquarters or at their events can be newsworthy.

Good signs must be:



Photographed and videoed

- Take lots of photos and videos to ensure you get one great photo.
- Share the photos through social media networks.
- Good photos taken at events will enhance your publications and create a stronger appeal in fundraising letters.
- Post video on YouTube to increase awareness for your issue.

TAKE PHOTOS & VIDEOS OF:

Your group with their signs

Your demonstrators in action

Your demonstrators talking to passersby

Any opposition activity in the area



Good signs must be:



Carried prudently

- Leftists often try to intimidate opponents. Good signs may cause them to target you.
- Be aware of fringe groups that will attempt to hijack your rally or protest with signs supporting extreme positions.
- Sometimes leftists may grab and destroy your signs or even deliberately use physical violence against you. Be prepared.
- If you suspect violence from opponents, notify law enforcement beforehand.
- Be prepared to take many photos and videos of misbehavior done by your opponents. Your camera alone may deter their bad behavior. However, if it does not, these photos can be used to embarrass your opponents, maybe even hold them accountable for violent actions in criminal or civil courts.

Your signs can make a difference. Find more help with your political activism at [LeadershipInstitute.org](https://www.leadershipinstitute.org).

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