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SIGNAGE SYSTEMS

Introduction to ADA Sign Making

The Law

In 1992, the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines *(ADAAG)* was initiated. Since then, the Department of Justice has updated the ADA regulations *(Title III)*, in effect as of March 15, 2011. The ADAAG requires all public places *(except government buildings and churches)* to install Americans with Disabilities Act *(ADA)*-compliant signage that includes tactile lettering, Grade II Braille, and in some cases, pictograms.

The ADA law language is very clear, as it places the responsibility for the conformance to the law on the owner of the signage project. Manufacturers, designers and those who act as agents of the project owner must be knowledgeable in the aspects of the accessibility guidelines presented in producing compliant signage.

The Standards for Accessible Design (SAD) define two categories of signs:

1. Signs that identify a permanent room or space (§216.2)

2. Signs giving directions to or information about permanent rooms or spaces (§216.3)

Signs that identify a permanent room or space *("identification" signs)* are required to use raised characters, Braille and must be properly mounted in a consistent location: *on the wall, next to the door, on the latch or on the strike plate of the door. Informational and directional signs are not required to be mounted in a consistent location and only require Visual Characters.*

Guidelines & Regulations for ADA-Compliant Signage

Color contrast is a very important factor in the creation of tactile/ADA signage. Accent adheres to the dark/light or light/dark rule. It's important to consult with your local municipality or the U.S. Department of Justice to ensure signs are ADA compliant.

Note that the March 2012 ADA regulations do not specify or require a particular contrast ratio percentage. The U.S. Department of Justice ADA Standards for Accessible Design Title III, section 4.30.5 reads: *"Finish and Contrast. The characters and background of signs shall be eggshell, matte, or other non-glare finish.*

Characters and symbols shall contrast with their background – either light characters on a dark background or dark characters on a light background."

Size & Space Requirements

ADA size requirements specify a text height range of 5/8-2".
Use the below chart as a reference for the amount of text that will fit on a sign.

Sign Width	Font Size *(standard sans serif font)*					
	5/8"	3/4"	7/8"	1"	1-1/4"	1-1/2"
4	5	4	3	3	-	-
6	7	6	5	4	4	3
8	11	9	8	7	5	4
10	14	11	10	9	7	6
12	18	14	12	11	8	7
18	25	21	18	16	13	11

Number of Characters *(including spaces)*

- *For 5/8" letters (common size), allow 2" of height per line of text, including the Braille translation below.*

- *Allow 2x the height of the characters for larger text sizes, plus 1" per line of Braille.*

[NOTE: This is only a guideline. The actual space needed may be more or less depending on the text.]

Additional Spacing Requirements

Pictograms: Use a 6" high area for a pictogram. There are currently no rules regarding the height of the pictogram. However, 4"-4.5" is a good place to start.

Braille: Leave a minimum of 3/8" clearance on all sides of Braille lettering.

Text Requirements

Use simple, sans serif fonts, in a medium or bold weight. The use of italics, scripts, or other hard-to-read styles is not recommended.

Sample fonts that meet ADA guidelines

HELVETICA	TREBUCHET
FUTURA	**VERDANA**
ARIAL	**MYRIAD PRO**
TAHOMA	CALIBRI
FRANKLIN GOTHIC	CENTURY GOTHIC

Note: On a tactile sign, all text must be UPPERCASE.

RESTROOM

1 *6" high area pictogram with nothing in it.*

2 *Letters and pictograms shall contrast with their background, using either dark on light, or light on dark.*

3 *The Braille should be positioned directly below the text.*

4 *Font is all uppercase, sans serif and 5/8" high minimum.*

Braille Regulations Quick Reference

Grade II Braille must accompany any text on tactile signs. Unlike Grade I, Grade II is not a "letter for letter" translation of the text; it contains 265 contractions, single characters used to represent whole words or groups of letters. Using accurate translation software is a must. We recommend CADlink EngraveLab Expert.

Capitalization

All Braille should be lowercase, excluding proper names ("John Smith"), letters which are part of a room number *("105A")*, initials, acronyms or before the first word of sentences. Typically, translation software is case-sensitive so if you type your text as lowercase, then the Braille will be lowercase, and vice versa.

Braille Examples

women
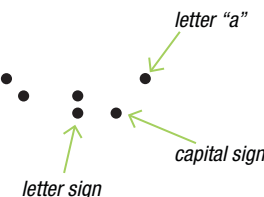
Correct:
Grade 2, contracted

Incorrect:
Grade 1, "letter for letter"

105A

letter "a"

Correct Translation   *letter sign*   *capital sign*

Double caps sign capitalizes whole word
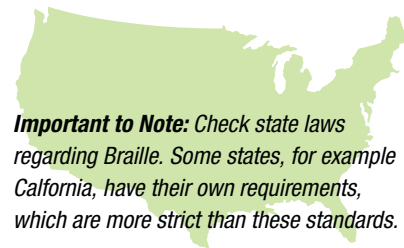
Single caps sign capitalizes first letter only

Braille Dot Sizing & Spacing

These are the standard dimensions for Braille from ANSI A117.1 and 2010 ADA Standards.

MEASUREMENT	
Dot height	0.025" to 0.037"
Dot diameter	0.059" to 0.063"
Spacing between dots	0.090" to 0.100"
Vertical cell spacing	0.395" to 0.400"
Horizontal cell spacing	0.241" to 0.300"
Dot shape	domed or rounded

Important to Note: Check state laws regarding Braille. Some states, for example Calfornia, have their own requirements, which are more strict than these standards.

Reference Chart for USA ADA-Compliant Signage
(2010 Standards)

FEATURE	Signs which designate permanent rooms and spaces: room #s, restrooms, exit signs	Signs which provide direction to, or information about functional spaces	Overhead signs 80" (2030 mm) above the floor
Tactile Depth	1/32" (0.8 mm) min.	N/A	N/A
Letter Height	5/8-2" (16-51 mm)	Sized to viewing distance	Sized to viewing distance
Letter Type	Uppercase only	Upper or lowercase	Upper or lower case
Letter Style	Sans serif*	Sans serif or Serif*	Sans serif or Serif*
	Character width:	Character width:	Character width:
	55-110% of character height*	55-110% of character height*	55-110% of character height*
	Character stroke:	Character stroke:	Character stroke:
	15% max. of character height*	10-30% of character height*	10-30% of character height*
	Inter-character spacing:	Inter-character spacing:	Inter-character spacing:
	1/8" (3 mm) min. / 4x stroke max.*	10-35% of character height*	10-35% of character height*
	1/16" (1.6 mm) min. for beveled		

*See ANSI/ADA guidelines for more complete information.

Different Styles of Copy for ADA Signage

Tactile is defined as perceptible by touch, so the words "tactile" and "raised" mean the same thing for sign specifications.

There are a number of methods available for creating such copy, each with its own set of advantages over the others. The three most commonly used methods are **applied, cut & paste, and inlay.**

Applied

Applied is Accent's most popular style of ADA-compliant copy. In this method, multiple signs are cut at one time, so it is the most budget-friendly option available.

Pros: Beveled edge, budget-friendly
Cons: Sign faces have to be acrylic or a similar material
Cost: $

Cut & Paste

Unlike with applied copy, cut & paste copy is done one sign at a time. The advantage with this method is that it opens up a greater range of materials that can be used for faceplates, such as aluminum and laminates. Because it is laser-cut, this style of copy does not have beveled edges.

Pros: Allows for variety of sign face materials
Cons: Least tamper-resistant build, labor-intensive
Cost: $

Inlay

Our third style of copy, inlay, is our most tamper-resistant option, and is comparable in durability to thermoformed and photopolymer signage. With inlay copy, a 1/32" channel is routed into the sign face. The copy, 1/16" thick for this style, is then mounted into place with a chemical weld so that only 1/32" stands out from the sign face.

Like with cut & paste copy, this method is labor-intensive, but it can be a wise choice for places where there's a greater chance of someone picking at the lettering.

Pros: More tamper-resistant than Applied or Cut & Paste, durable
Cons: Requires thicker copy material, labor-intensive
Cost: $$

Total ADA Sign Making Solution – Raster® Braille

Accent Signage Systems offers the Raster® Braille System for sign makers looking for a tool in aiding the fabrication of ADA-compliant signs. The Raster® method of Braille has been the preferred process for producing ADA compliant Braille for over 30 years.

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Fabrication is fast and easy and the perfectly rounded Braille spheres offer a clean, uniform appearance that is durable and vandal resistant.

Raster® Braille Systems' dome-shaped spheres meet current ADA and ANSI guidelines.

Get started today producing compliant Raster® Braille signs!

- The Raster® Pen License Kit provides you everything you need to start producing compliant signs that meet current regulations.

- You will need a routing or engraving system that includes a Grade II Braille translator and a single point drill function, or you can use the Raster® Braille Pen to manually insert the spheres. You should also have a UEB (Unified English Braille) Translator.

How We Help

Accent Signage Systems, Inc. is a **wholesale manufacturer of ADA-compliant interior signage** along with extraordinarily inventive display solutions.

We take great pride in serving the interior signage market as a partner to sign shops everywhere. Whether your company is looking to expand its fabrication capabilities, or simply needs help with special projects and overflow, Accent is here to help. Our 30,000-sq. ft. facility houses our state-of-the-art machinery, quality materials, and expert staff with the knowledge and know-how to tackle any project you send our way.

If you have a question about the law, how to fabricate, or need assistance on completing a submittal for your next sign-making project, contact us at *braille@accentsignage.com*.

Our mission is to add value to our customers by providing innovative, high quality solutions with the help of science, technology, and expertise.

Today, designers and sign makers have unlimited creative possibilities and design options for ADA-compliant signage. A sign can now be 100% ADA compliant with the added potential to fit into a building's overall design and aesthetic appeal. Though the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires adherence to specific rules, ADA signage is not difficult to create and can be made using most of the equipment that sign makers already have.

The appeal of the ADA market is demand; ADA signs are required by law, so the need is constant. With a combination of creativity, functionality and skill, fabricators have a tremendous opportunity for repeat business and a loyal customer base.

To start growing your ADA sign-making business today, shop online at accentsignage.com.

Reference websites:

For additional information, Accent recommends visiting the following websites:

Rowmark.com *– ADA Color Contrast Charts, Complete ADA Sign-Making Guide.*

Access-board.gov *– The U.S. Access Board is an independent federal agency whose primary mission is accessibility for people with disabilities.*

Ansi.org *– ANSI, the American National Standards Institue provides the latest in national standards.*

ADA.gov *– Department of Justice, ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act website.*

Ada.gov/taman3.html *– Americans with Disabilities Act Title III Technical Assistance Manual.*

Cadlink.com *– CADLink EngraveLab Expert Software*

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Accent Signage is here to provide you with more information, answer any questions you may have, and create effective solutions for any of your signage needs.

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ACCENT PRODUCT INFORMATION

Information herein is intended as a summary of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) law as it pertains to signage and is solely intended as a reference tool to Accent customers. Accent Signage Systems assumes no liability for errors resulting from the interpretation and use of this reference material. Some state and local building code requirements may be more stringent that the federal law.