

# Colorful Signs

Signs may be used for many different purposes. From providing information, protesting or marketing your organization; signs direct, inform and inspire your audience. Keep your sign simple, easy to read and concise. Signs do not have to be boring with lots of text. People will either not read it or remember the information. If you add color, dimension, different shapes and images, the sign will have much more impact on the target audience.

## PROCESS

### Gather the materials needed

- This will depend on the permanence and resources available. Signs can be made from cardboard (for protests and parades), wood, metal, etc. Think about adding dimensionality and colors to the sign.
- The letters can be painted different colors or made with recycled materials, fabrics, collage, tiles, etc.
- You can also cut out the sign into different shapes. Rather than be a square or rectangle, it can be cut into the shape of a fish, corn or flower, depending on the message you want to convey.
- If using plywood, make sure to sand it and paint a base coat first.

### Determine the content

- What do you want the sign to say? Keep it simple and concise.
- Can you add it humor or catchy phrases for people to more easily remember?
- Remember that a picture speaks a thousand words – can you communicate your message through images?

### Design and make an outline

- Choose the colors, images and font for the letters. Think about shading or outlining the letters so that they stand out. How can you make the design

most powerful and/or beautiful? What kind of energy do you want to transmit?

- Remember that viewers read your sign from top to bottom. The most important information should be toward the top of your sign in order for your reader to absorb it. If words are randomly placed throughout the sign, it may be hard for the audience to read it.
- Sketch out the sign with pencil and paper first to make sure that it is centered and that the writing is clear, large and legible.
- Transfer the outline to the sign.
- You can cut out stencils for consistent lettering or write them by hand.

### **Paint and/or decorate the sign**

- You can use acrylic/spray paint and fill in the outline you just created.
- You can paint details inside of the letters as well, using a small paint brush. This would also be a great time to add any miscellaneous designs or images you want, like vines, swirls, or different shapes. Decorate it with items if you wish with beads, shells, string or recycled materials to make it more dimensional, visually interesting and eye-catching.
- Add wax or a clear top coat to protect the surface from weathering.

### ***Other options:***

- **Copy and print:** download, and email to yourself or put on a flash drive and go to your printing place or find out who you know who has a color printer or access to color printing. Make color copies (or black and white copies- depending on design) on 11×17 or 12×18 (if that is an option). It's ideal if you can get cardstock or a heavy paper.
- **Hand color!** The black and white designs are great to print out and hand color—perfect for hosting an art build for the march. You can easily copy onto 11×17 paper, or enlarge larger, either by cutting and pasting two more more enlarged section together or by coping on a large format copier. You can use colored pencils, watercolors or watered down latex or acrylic paints—watered down so it the black lines come through, but the color is not too weak. Get brushes that work and do some testing.

**Mount the signs:** You can also mount them on cut-to-size posterboard/cardboard/thin plywood/etc using spray adhesive, glue stick, or tape around the edges. You can use a colored paper/board with a border showing or paint border.

**Enlarge and assemble:** One way to make a larger sign is to enlarge the design onto two sideways 11×17 sheets, cut and paste together on a rigid backing, to make one bigger sign—or do it in 4 sections and make it even bigger. You can also get larger color copies at many copyshops, but it can be expensive.

### **Display your sign(s)**

- Choose a public location where the sign will get the most visibility.
- If it is a temporary sign for a parade or protest, consider making multiple copies (using stencils) for greatest impact (see Repetitive Images for instructions).
- Take photos of your sign and share via media or social media outlets to communicate your message more broadly!