



## Introduction to ADA Sign Making



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For 30 years, Rowmark has led the industry in manufacturing materials for tactile, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and sign-making applications, meeting and exceeding government regulations. In recent years Rowmark has expanded its product line to include several ADA-compliant materials, including ADA Alternative® Substrate and Appliqué, Ultra-Mattes Reverse Engravable, ColorCast Acrylics and the brilliant ColorHues™ engravable materials.

- Rowmark offers premium versatile products engineered for fabrication processing, engineered for laser, rotary and router equipment.
- Choices are available in the industry's widest range of trending colors in compliant, government mandated matte, eggshell finish.
- Compliant signs can be fabricated quickly and effortlessly using Rowmark materials in conjunction with laser/rotary engravable equipment and the Accent Signage System's patented Raster® Braille system.
- Rowmark provides the industry the best educational tools, resources and how-to documents on ***rowmark.com***.

## 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. Rowmark adheres to the dark/light or light/dark rule. Rowmark’s Color Contrast Chart on rowmark.com provides a variety of substrate/appliqué color suggestions; however, this is only a guide. 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*.

- 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 Duxbury.

## 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



**Correct**

**Translation**

*letter sign*

*letter "a"*

*capital sign*



Double caps sign  
capitalizes whole word



Single caps sign  
capitalizes first letter only

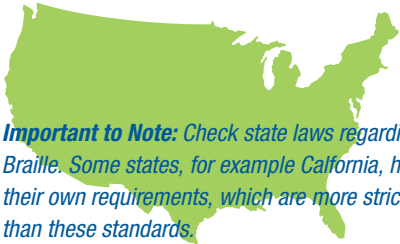


# Braille Dot Sizing & Spacing

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 California, have their own requirements, which are more strict than these standards.



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

FEATURE	<i>Signs which designate permanent rooms and spaces: room #s, restrooms, exit signs</i>	<i>Signs which provide direction to, or information about functional spaces</i>	<i>Overhead signs 80" (2030 mm) above the floor</i>
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* <i>Character width:</i> 55-110% of character height*  <i>Character stroke:</i> 15% max. of character height*  <i>Inter-character spacing:</i> 1/8" (3 mm) min. / 4x stroke max.* 1/16" (1.6 mm) min. for beveled	Sans serif or Serif* <i>Character width:</i> 55-110% of character height*  <i>Character stroke:</i> 10-30% of character height*  <i>Inter-character spacing:</i> 10-35% of character height*	Sans serif or Serif* <i>Character width:</i> 55-110% of character height*  <i>Character stroke:</i> 10-30% of character height*  <i>Inter-character spacing:</i> 10-35% of character height*

\*See ANSI/ADA guidelines for more complete information.



# Expand Your Business

The interior signage market is diversified and becoming increasingly designer-friendly as sign equipment and processes are more accessible. Signage is a natural extension for many businesses, including trophy and award shops to add additional revenue and increased profits.

Today's ADA-compliant signage is no longer utilitarian and is rich in color, finish, texture and dimension. It can also be incorporated as part of a larger signage vision. Many ADA-compliant colors and substrates are available today, and customers can also decorate ADA-compliant materials through digital printing, custom painting and full-color sublimation.

Rowmark recognizes the creative aspect of sign-making by offering a range of engravable ADA-compliant materials, sign frames and stand-offs, to create functional and attractive designs. Rowmark will work with you on your project and can quote custom colors to meet customer requests.



Rowmark monitors color trends to give our customers a competitive edge in the market. Rowmark's affiliation with the Color Marketing Group (CMG) and the interior design industry provides access to color combinations that meet current specifications and demand.



## How We Help

**For 30 years, Rowmark** has been manufacturing engravable sheet products. Our products are consistent, in-stock, and ready to ship at a moment's notice.

Rowmark's fabrication and testing lab employs a team of industry experts who understand the ADA sign-making laws and how to properly make compliant signs to meet and exceed standards.

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 [techhelp@rowmark.com](mailto:techhelp@rowmark.com).

Rowmark prides itself in offering the most expansive line of ADA-compliant sign making substrates in today's most trending colors to meet architectural needs.



# Rowmark Products for ADA-Compliant Sign Making

Rowmark offers the industry's widest selection of products suited to fabricate compliant ADA and tactile signage. Our matte, non-glare acrylic sheet materials are specially designed to comply with ADA regulations.

And, Rowmark's products are proudly manufactured in the USA.



# ADA Alternative *Applique and Substrate*

Rowmark leads the sign-making industry as the first manufacturer to introduce a sign-making substrate to comply with ADA signage regulations. Available in 44 popular colors (including Clear for custom color matching needs) to suit the architectural signage market.

Stock thicknesses include 1/32", 1/16" and 1/8".

Red	Burgundy	Canyon	Orange	Yellow	Bright Green	Pine Green
Hunter Green	Black Forest Green	Bahama Blue	Blue	Sapphire	Light Blue	Coastal Blue
China Blue	Slate	Air Force Blue	Marine Blue	Ultra Violet	Antique Ivory	Sand
Ash	Parchment	Sandalwood	White	Bright White	Light Grey	Pearl Grey
Driftwood	Grey Flannel	Grey	Silver Grey	Charcoal Grey	Cinder	Beige
Desert Sand	Candlewick	Putty	Taupe	Med. Brown	Dark Brown	Black
Copper	Deep Bronze	Gold	Silver	Graphite	Clear	

# Ultra-Mattes Reverse

Also ideal for ADA sign-making projects, Ultra-Mattes Reverse features a clear non-glare matte finish over a layer of rich color. This unique product line also allows sign makers to achieve special effects with reverse engraving, back painting graphics and sub-surface designs.

Also available in 34 popular colors *(including Clear for custom color matching needs)* to suit the architectural signage market.

**Stock thicknesses include 1/32", 1/16" and 1/8".**

Matte/ Red	Matte/ Dusty Rose	Matte/ Ruby	Matte/ Canyon	Matte/ Orange	Matte/ Yellow	Matte/ Bright Green
Matte/ Celadon Green	Matte/ Hunter Green	Matte/Black Forest Green	Matte/ Sea Grey	Matte/ Teal	Matte/ Ocean Blue	Matte/ Blue
Matte/ Sapphire	Matte/ Blueberry	Matte/ China Blue	Matte/ Beige	Matte/ Taupe	Matte/ Cinder	Matte/ Charcoal Grey
Matte/ Dark Brown	Matte/ Vintage Gold	Matte/ Vintage Silver	Matte/ Graphite	Matte/ Black	Matte/ White	Matte/ Ash
Matte/ Sandalwood	Matte/ Parchment	Matte/ Ivory	Matte/ Cement	Matte/ Driftwood	Matte/ Clear	

# ColorHues®

(Cell cast acrylic - PMMA) is a single-ply sheet material with brilliant shades of color, offered in semi translucent and opaque hues, and is suited perfectly as an ADA sign-making substrate. ColorHues' semi-translucent materials are the perfect sheet to pair with stand-offs and mounting fixtures to create ADA-compliant dimensional signage options.

This popular product line is offered in 30 matte finish colors (including Clear for custom color matching needs).

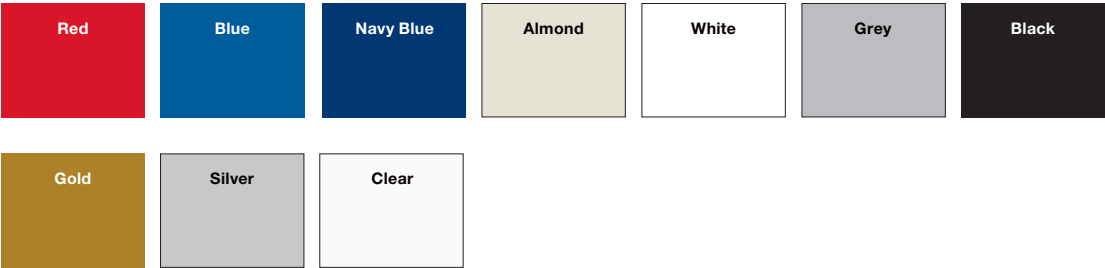
**Stock thicknesses include in 1/8" and 1/4".**



# ColorCast Acrylics

ColorCast Acrylics is a cell cast acrylic product that is harder and has greater optical clarity than extruded acrylics. ColorCast is perfectly suited as a substrate for ADA signage applications. ColorCast is engineered to be reverse engraved and back painted for added custom branded or decorated looks for ADA compliant signage projects.

**Stock thicknesses include 1/8" and 1/4".**

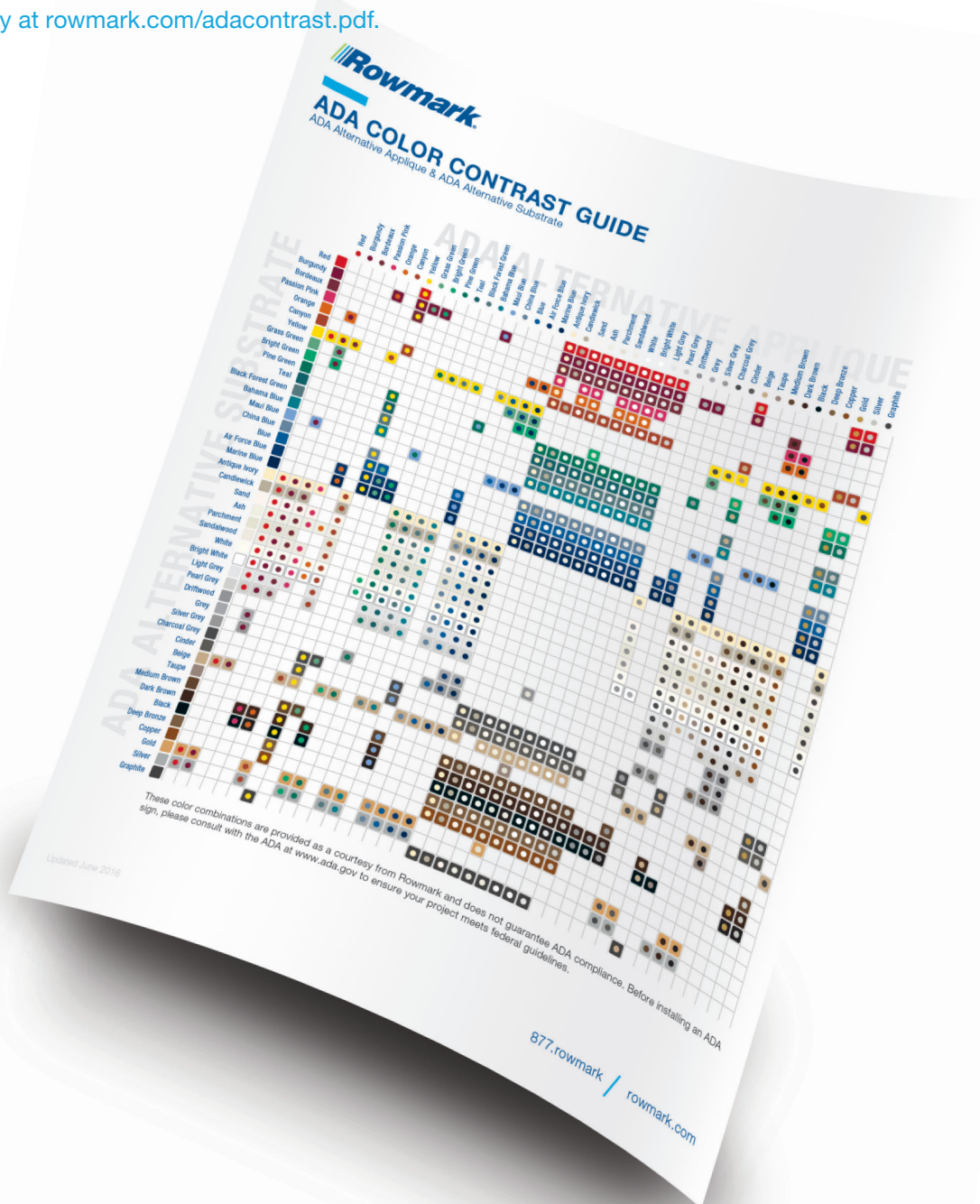




# Need Help Selecting Contrasting Colors?

Download the Rowmark ADA Color Contrast Guide

today at [rowmark.com/adacontrast.pdf](http://rowmark.com/adacontrast.pdf).





# Total ADA Sign Making Solution – Raster® Braille

Rowmark has partnered with Accent Signage Systems to offer 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.



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.



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, order Rowmark products from our Authorized Rowmark Distributors. Find yours now at [rowmark.com](http://rowmark.com).**

#### **Reference websites:**

*For additional information, Rowmark 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 Institute 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.

**Duxburysystems.com** – The leading software system for Braille translation.





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Engage. Interact. Share.



## ROWMARK PRODUCT INFORMATION

All Rowmark products are available exclusively through Authorized Rowmark Distributors. Rowmark is a supplier to the signage industry and does not create finished signs or compete against our customers. Rowmark views sign making professionals as both customers and partners and does not bid signage jobs directly. Working together, we can satisfy your customers' ADA needs.

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 Rowmark customers. Rowmark LLC and its Authorized Distributors assume 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 than the federal law.

Rowmark's QMS is  
ISO 9001 certified