Quick reference guide to ADA signage

The guidelines and regulations for ADA-compliant signage may seem daunting, but if you keep a few simple “rules of thumb” in mind while designing your signs, it’s easy to create great looking signs that are fully compliant. Use this quick reference guide to point you in the right direction.

Size and Space Requirements:

ADA requirements specify a size range for text height of 5/8 - 2 inches.
Use this chart to help you determine how much text will fit on a sign.

	Font Size (Standard sans serif font)					
Sign Width	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)					

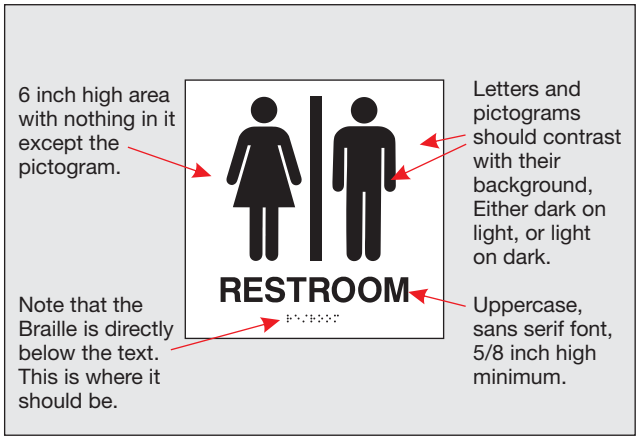
For 5/8 inch letters (the most common size), you need to allow 2 inches of height per line of text, including the Braille translation below. For larger text sizes, allow 2 times the height of the characters, plus 1 inch per line of Braille.
This is a general guideline; actual space needed may be more or less depending on the text.

Other Spacing Requirements:

Pictograms: You need a 6 inch high area for a pictogram. There are no rules regarding the actual height of the pictogram, but 4-4.5 inches is a good starting point.

Braille: You need to leave a minimum of 3/8 inch clearance on all side of Braille.

Text: Use simple, sans serif fonts, in a medium or bold weight. Do not use italics, scripts, or other hard-to-read styles. For tactile signs, all text must be UPPERCASE. For visual only signs, such as directories, directional signs or overhead signs, you can use lowercase letters.



A few fonts that meet ADA guidelines:

HELVETICA
FUTURA
ERAS
OPTIMA
AVANT GARDE
TREBUCHET
VERDANA
VAG ROUNDED
FRANKLIN GOTHIC
FRUTIGER

Remember, on a tactile sign, all text must be UPPERCASE.

Braille Quick Reference

Text on tactile signs must be accompanied by Grade 2 Braille. Grade 2 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. Accurate translation software is a must. We recommend Duxbury.

All Braille should be lowercase, except proper names (“Fred Jones”), letters which are part of a room number (“105A”), initials, acronyms or before the first word of sentences. Most translation software is case-sensitive so if you type your text as lowercase the Braille will be lowercase, and vice versa.

For Example:

women

Correct:
Grade 2,
contracted

Incorrect:
Grade 1,
“letter for letter”

Double caps sign
capitalizes whole word

Single caps sign
capitalizes first letter only

105A

Correct Translation

Capitalization: Braille is required to be lowercase with the exception of proper nouns and names, individual letters of the alphabet, initials, acronyms, or before the first word of sentences.

Braille Dot Sizing and Spacing:

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

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:
Check your state laws regarding Braille. Some states, such as California, have their own requirements, which are more strict than these standards.

These are most of the regulations and standards you should be aware of. For more information, check our website www.accentsignage.com for links to ANSI, the U.S. Department of Justice (which oversees the ADA law) and other useful sites.

Contact us for information on our Raster® Method of Braille, our comprehensive ADA sign manual, frame systems, sign materials,and more.

ADA LAWS & REGULATIONS

EASY 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 inches (2030 mm) above the floor
Tactile Depth	1/32 inch (0.8 mm) minimum	NA	NA
Letter Height	5/8 - 2 inch (16-51 mm)	Sized to viewing distance	Sized to viewing distance
Letter Type	Upper Case only	Upper or Lower Case	Upper or Lower Case
Letter Style	Sans Serif* Character width: 55-110% of character height* Character stroke: 15% max. of character height* Inter-character Spacing: 1/8 (3 mm) min. / 4x stroke max.* 1/16 (1.6 mm) min. for beveled	Sans Serif or Serif* Character width: 55-110% of character height* Character stroke: 10-30% of character height* Inter-character Spacing: 10-35% of character height*	Sans Serif or Serif* Character width: 55-110% of character height* Character stroke: 10-30% of character height* Inter-character Spacing: 10-35% of character height*
Pictogram	Raised, incised, or subsurface Within 6 inch (152 mm) field min. Verbal description directly below The following symbols may be required: 	NA NA NA The following symbols may be used: 	NA NA NA The following symbols may be used:
Braille	Domed Grade 2 Braille Dot Height: .025-.037 inch (0.6-0.9 mm) Dot Diameter: .059-.063 inch (1.5-1.6 mm) Interdot Spacing: .090-.100 inch (2.3-2.5 mm) Horizontal Cell Separation: .241-.300 inch (6.1-7.6 mm) Vertical Cell Separation: .395-.400 inch (10.0-10.2 mm)	NA	NA
Finish	Characters and background: non-glare finish.*	Characters and background: non-glare finish.	Characters and background: non-glare finish.
Contrast	Characters and Symbols must contrast with background. Light characters/symbols on dark background (or vice versa).	Characters and Symbols must contrast with background. Light characters/symbols on dark background (or vice versa).	Characters and Symbols must contrast with background. Light characters/symbols on dark background (or vice versa).

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

USA ADA STANDARDS COMPARISON FOR PERMANENT ROOM SIGNS

FEATURE	1992 ADA STANDARD	2010 ADA STANDARD (ANSI A117.1 - 2003)
Tactile Depth	1/32 inch (0.8 mm) minimum	1/32 inch (0.8 mm) minimum
Letter Height	5/8 - 2 inch (16-51 mm)	5/8 - 2 inch (16-51 mm) *1/2 inch min. for Combo Tactile/Visual signs*
Letter Type	Upper Case only for Tactile Text	Upper Case only for Tactile Text *Upper or Lower Case for Visual Only Text*
Letter Style	Sans Serif or Simple Serif Character Width to Height Ratio between 3:5 and 1:1 Character Stroke Width to Height Ratio between 1:5 and 1:10	Sans Serif only for Tactile Text *Sans Serif or Serif for Visual Only Text* Character Width: 55-110% of character height Character Stroke: 15% of character height *10-30% of character height for visual only text* Inter-character Spacing: 10-35% of character height
Pictogram	Raised, incised, or subsurface Within 6 inch (152 mm) field min. Verbal description directly below The following symbols may be required: 	Raised, incised, or subsurface Within 6 inch (152 mm) field min. Verbal description directly below The following symbols may be required:
Raised Borders	*(not specified)*	Raised borders or design elements must be 3/8 inch minimum from Tactile Text and Braille.
Braille	Grade 2 Braille Dot Height: *(not specified)* Dot Diameter: .059 inch (1.5 mm) Interdot Spacing: .090 inch (2.3 mm) Horizontal Cell Space: .241 inch (6.1 mm) Vertical Cell Space: .395 inch (10.0 mm)	**Domed** Grade 2 Braille Dot Height: .025-.037 inch (0.6-0.9 mm) Dot Diameter: .059-.063 inch (1.5-1.6 mm) Interdot Spacing: .090-.100 inch (2.3-2.5 mm) Horizontal Cell Separation: .241-.300 inch (6.1-7.6 mm) Vertical Cell Separation: .395-.400 inch (10.0-10.2 mm)
Braille Placement	*(not specified)*	Minimum 3/8 inch (9.5 mm) below corresponding Tactile Text. If text is multi-lined, Braille shall be placed below entire text.
Finish	Eggshell, matte or other non-glare.	Non-glare finish (characters and backgrounds).
Contrast	Characters and Symbols must contrast with their backgrounds. 70% recommended.	Characters and Symbols must contrast with their backgrounds. *Note: On Combo Tactile/Visual signs the tactile text is not required to contrast with the background.*
Mounting Height	60 inches (1525 mm) from centerline of sign to the finished floor.	Tactile characters 48 - 60 inches above finished floor, measured from the baseline of the characters. *(See chapter 9 for more information)*