

Glossary of Terms

3M Certified Installers - becoming a 3M certified graphic installation company requires a minimum of three years in business, extensive onsite inspections to ensure adherence to 3M's installation guidelines, passing of proficiency tests at 3M's headquarters in St. Paul, MN, and adherence to a code of conduct.

Acrylic - Generic term for manufactured synthetic polymer or plastic. Also referred to as plexiglass. Used for interior and exterior signs.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) - Legislation enacted by the U.S. federal government in 1991 with the goal of removing barriers that limit a disabled individual's ability to engage in normal daily activity in the physical, public environment. Title III of the ADA deals with related signage and way finding issues.

Adhesive - a material or substance able to bind and hold two surfaces together. Examples include glue, epoxy and tape.

Adobe Acrobat® - Popular software package used for viewing and printing Portable Document Format (PDF) files. The advantage of a PDF file is that it allows anyone to view and print a document as it was originally intended without having to install the program or fonts used to create the file. Adobe Acrobat is a product of Adobe Systems®, Inc

Air Egress Vinyl - Vinyl that has characteristics that allow air bubbles to escape through channels in the adhesive as the film is being applied.

Aluminum - A lightweight metal material used in sign panels, poles and frames. It is strong and durable in relation to its weight, and resistant to rust and corrosion.

Aqueous Ink - Inks that use water as a carrier. Aqueous inks may contain dyes or pigments as colorants.

Architectural Signage - A term used to describe signage in a built environment having the purpose of providing way finding or other site specific information.

Artwork - Any and all logos, graphics and images used in creating a sign.

Aspect Ratio - The width-to-height ratio of an image. For example, a high definition television image has an aspect ratio of 1.78:1 (commonly referenced as 16:9), meaning that for every 1.78 inches of image width the image extends 1 inch in height.

Back-to-Back Sign - A sign having two faces mounted in opposite directions. Pole signs typically have back-to-back faces. (Also called a double-faced sign.)

Backlit Sign - A sign where the sign face is illuminated from behind. (Also called illuminated sign. See also internally illuminated sign and exterior illuminated sign.)

Banding - The appearance of solid bands or patterns of visibly distinct colors within what should otherwise be a continuous and seamless color gradation. Banding can be caused by several factors, including low resolution artwork, a poor quality scan of the original artwork or improper calibration of the printer used.

Banners - A sign made of non rigid material such as canvas or vinyl, and typically having no enclosing or supporting framework. Often intended for temporary use, a banner sign can be screen printed or painted, and is commonly hung from a pole or mounted to the facade of a building. (See also flag and pennant.)

Banner Mesh - An extremely lightweight, durable mesh polyester banner material. Great for large exterior wall murals where weight and/or wind would become a problem using other substrates. May be sewn, seamed and grommetted to finish in a wide variety of methods and sizes.

Banner Vinyl - Indoor or outdoor applications with either spot or full color graphics. A durable scrim extruded within the banner fabric makes the banner extremely durable when used outdoors. May be sewn, seamed, and grommetted to finish in a wide variety of methods and sizes.

Blackout - A specially formulated paint or coating for use on electric signs to block light emission where needed, for example between letters in a neon sign. It adheres well to glass, and resists weather, heat and electrical discharge. (Also called blackout.)

Blank - An uninstalled sign panel with no lettering or graphics applied. (Also called an insert.)

Bleed - the term refers to the portion of a printed image or graphic which extends beyond the intended borders of a sign, vehicle, etc. This excess portion is trimmed away.

Border - A line or band of color or material that defines that outer edges of a sign and/or elements within the sign

Box Sign - A sign that is self enclosed in a typically square or rectangular structure with or without internal lighting. Can be single- or double-faced. (See also light box.)

Braille - A system of small raised dots that represent the alphabet, punctuation and numbers for the visually impaired. The ADA stipulates the use of Braille on signage in certain instances.

Brand Equity - The value a customer places on a branded product or service. It is the qualitative sum of everything that a customer thinks, feels and knows about the product or service. The value of brand equity can be determined by comparing the expected future revenue of the branded product/service against the expected future revenue from an equivalent but non-branded product/service. (See also branding.)

Branding - The process of creating a unique, positive and recognizable identity for a product or service. Along with marketing and advertising, creating a visual identity through signage is an important part of the branding process. (See also brand equity.)

Breaking Strength - The maximum load a material can withstand before it breaks. (Also called tensile strength.)

Brightness - 1. The perceived amount of light that a visual target emits or reflects. Its relative luminance. 2. The amount of white in a given color. The greater the amount of white, the brighter the color is said to be. Brightness is one of the three attributes of color along with hue and saturation.

Bronze - A very strong and durable metal alloy made of copper and tin with traces of other metals such as zinc and nickel. It can be cast for the making of plaques, or fabricated from thin sheets into dimensional letters. Bronze can be finished in a variety of ways including being brushed, polished or lacquered.

Brushed Finish - A textured, non-reflective polished finish applied to metal by lightly brushing the surface with an abrasive material or briefly applying a mildly corrosive chemical.

Building Code - Regulations issued by state and local governments that establish standards for the construction, modification and repair of buildings and other structures in the interest of public health, safety and general welfare. (See also content neutral time, place and manner regulations.)

Building Mounted Sign - Any sign that is applied or attached to a building in some manner.

Building Wraps - are typically made of mesh vinyl banner or perforated window film, building wraps allow light to pass through and are visible from the inside out, can cover a small portion of a building or entire facades, perfect for promotional purposes, creates HUGE visibility & unmatched impact.

Bus Art Vinyl - A 4mil flexible white vinyl coated with a repositionable/removable adhesive. Bus art is removable for up to 1 year. Designed for full or partial wraps.

Butt Joint - The type of joint formed when two pieces of material (wood, metal, etc.) come together flush and edge-to-edge.

CAD (computer aided design) Software - Advanced software used in engineering and manufacturing to create and modify complex 3D technical drawings of a device and its components.

Canvas - tightly woven heavy and durable fabric made of cotton, linen or synthetic material.

Changeable Adhesive - Can be removed without heat or chemicals, leaves minimal residue.

CMYK - Abbreviation for the ink colors cyan, magenta, yellow and black. Combinations of these four colors of inks are used in printing to create all other colors.

Color Contrast - The subjective degree of difference in hue, intensity and saturation of two colors when seen next to each other.

Color Separation - The process of decomposing and separating a color graphic or image into its four constituent CMYK ink colors.

Compound Curves - Surface with three dimensional curves.

Concealed Fasteners - used to mount signs to walls and others surfaces while remaining hidden from view. (Also called blind fasteners.)

Conformable - Feature in some graphic films that allows it to conform around curves and rivets.

Construction Site Sign - temporary sign, typically large and freestanding, displayed at construction site to promote and provide information about the company or companies involved in the project. These can include the contractor, architect, developer, etc. (Also called a job site sign.)

Contrast - 1. The amount of difference between the lightest and darkest areas in an image or scene. 2. The visual characteristics of an object such as size, shape and color that make it distinguishable from other objects near it and the background it is set against.

Copy - the written message on a sign. (See also artwork.)

Copy Area - The area on a sign face that contains the copy.

Corrugated Board - A sign board created by gluing a corrugated piece of material to a flat piece of material, or between two flat pieces. The most common type of corrugated material used in sign making is plastic.

Coverage - 1. The square surface area that a given amount of paint, glue or other applied substance will cover. 2. The percentage of people in a market that are reached by an advertisement in a given medium, e.g. print, radio, TV and signage.

Curing - The process of drying or hardening ink, glue or other substances through the application of heat or ultraviolet light.

Decal - printed lettering and graphics that can be transferred and affixed to another surface.

Denier - A unit of measure for the weight of fiber. Specifically, it is the weight in grams of 9,000 meters of a given fiber.

Design - The clear and complete specifications for the appearance, structure and implementation of a sign, vehicle wrap, banner, etc.

Die-Cutting - The process of cutting material such as paper or vinyl using a steel blade (called a die) manufactured to cut a specific shape. The die-cutting process is typically used when a large number of items must be cut to the same shape or size.

Directional Sign - A sign providing information, either written or visual, that helps direct a person to a destination.

Directory Sign - A sign that provides an organized list of names of people, offices or facilities located within a given building or area. Usually located at a public access point such as a building lobby, a directory sign may provide simple text listings or also include maps and other wayfinding information.

Double-Faced Sign - A sign having two faces mounted in opposite directions. Pole signs are typically doubled-faced. (Also called a back-to-back sign.)

DPI (Dots per Inch) - The number of dots in a raster image that will occur in one line in the span of one inch. The higher the DPI, the greater the resolution and the less distinguishable each pixel becomes.

Drop Shadow - The visual effect of creating a false shadow behind a letter or object by placing a darker colored but identically shaped copy of it behind it but slightly offset up or down and to one side.

Eco-Solvent Inks - Inks using less toxic solvent-based carrier. Printers using eco-solvent inks emit less harmful VOCs (volatile organic compounds).

Embellishment - In signage, it refers to any element of a sign face that provides a decorative effect.

Environmental Graphics - any graphical treatment used to activate, inform, and organize the places where people live, work, play, and learn. They can be colors on a wall, large banners used to create an ambiance, or any graphic that's used to set the tone of your space.

Epoxy - A very strong, two-part adhesive—resin plus hardening agent—capable of bonding together a wide range of materials, including woods, composites and metals.

Event Signage - is an integral part of a successful event. Use it to set the mood, inform guests, direct traffic, and express your brand.

Eyelet - a small metal or plastic ring that is inserted into a hole made in another piece of material. It prevents fraying of the material around the hole and provides a durable, easily threaded opening for rope or twine. (Also called a grommet.)

Fabricate - to manufacture a sign or major sign components.

Facade - The exterior walls of a building, especially the front or the most prominent side of the building

Face - Typically refers to the most prominent message area of a sign but may refer generically to any message area. (Also called sign face. See also panel.)

Fascia Sign - A sign mounted to a wall or other vertical surface. A flat sign that is mounted on a wall and the face of which runs parallel to the wall. A fascia sign does not typically project from the wall.

Fasteners - General term for nuts, bolts, clips and any other mechanical device that helps hold a sign together.

Fiberglass - A strong, lightweight material created from tiny glass threads woven into a fabric and then hardened using a special polyester resin. Fiberglass can be used to create sign faces and cabinets of varying sizes and shapes. (See also spun glass.)

Fire Retardant - A chemical compound applied to a material that reduces the material's flammability and retards the ability of fire to spread across its surface. Fire retardant does not make the material fire proof

First Surface - That element or layer that comprises the outermost surface of a sign.

Flag - A sign made of non rigid material such as canvas or vinyl, and having no enclosing or supporting framework. A flag is usually rectangular or triangular in shape, and is attached at one end to a pole. Often intended for temporary use. (See also banner and pennant.)

Flammability - The relative ability of a material or substance to support combustion.

Fleet Graphics - are graphics applied to multiple vehicles owned by one company and are a great way to build recognition for your brand.

Floor Graphics - are non-skid, full color vibrant designs. They are made of durable vinyl with laminate for long lasting effective results perfect for promotions and sales.

Font - A set of letters and numerals sharing the same design characteristics. Examples of font sets include Times New Roman and Arial. (Also called typeface.)

Four Color Process - A halftone printing process that uses the four essential ink colors of cyan, magenta, yellow and black (CMYK) to create a full range of colors on a printed surface. (Also called process color.)

Freestanding Sign - A sign that is not attached to a building, has its own support structure.

Full Vehicle Wrap - wrap encompassing the entire vehicle. Typically includes integrating design using graphics & vibrant colors to get you noticed. Full vehicle wraps turn your vehicle into a mobile billboard to maximize your ROI.

Gloss - An indicator of the amount of light reflected by the finish of a surface. A high gloss finish reflects 80-90% of the light directed at it. Semi gloss 50-75%. Satin 30-45%. Matte finish 5-15%.

Gradiation - The smooth transition from one color to another color, from black to white, or from color to the absence of color. (Also called gradient.)

Gradient - The smooth transition from one color to another color, from black to white, or from color to the absence of color. (Also called gradation.)

Grommet - A small metal or plastic ring that is inserted into a hole made in another piece of material. It prevents fraying of the material around the hole and provides a durable, easily threaded opening for rope or twine. (Also called an eyelet.)

Ground Sign - A freestanding sign that is not secured to a foundation or other secondary support structure.

Halftone - The process by which a continuous tone image such as a photograph is reproduced and simulated using a pattern of printed or silk screened dots of varying size and equal spacing. At a normal viewing distance the reproduced image appears as continuous tone.

Hanging Sign - A projecting double-faced sign mounted to a wall or pole and hung from a bracket or support arm. (Also known as a projecting sign.)

Hue - A given color's tendency towards any of the four base wavelengths of visible light: red, yellow, blue and green. For example, if yellow appears more dominant in an orange colored ink, then that color orange would be said to have a yellowish hue. Hue is one of the three attributes of color along with brightness and saturation.

Identification Sign- A sign that provides the name of the business displaying the sign.

Incidental Sign - A sign intended for informational purposes as opposed to commercial or advertising purposes. Typically smaller in size, examples of incidental signs include parking signs, restroom signs and entrance and exit signs.

Ink - Pigmented liquid used for printing. Inks are either water-based or solvent-based depending on the application.

Ink Receptive - Refers to any material that will absorb ink and bond with it.

Insert - An uninstalled sign panel with no lettering or graphics applied. (Also called a blank).

Interior Sign - Any sign located within a building or structure.

Italic - A font style characterized by a distinct slant in the letters and numbers. (Example: *ABC123*.)

Job Site Sign - A temporary sign, typically large and freestanding, displayed at construction site to promote and provide information about the company or companies involved in the project. These can include the contractor, architect, developer, etc. (Also called a construction site sign.)

JPEG (Joint Photographic Exports Group) - A common file format for color digital images. The JPEG standard utilizes a 'lossy' data compression method, meaning that in order to reduce the overall size of the file a small amount of sharpness from the original image is sacrificed.

Kerning - The act of moving printed or mounted letters further apart or closer together in order to achieve a desired effect. (See also letter spacing, tracking and justified.)

Laminate - Laminated materials are made of two or more plies fused together under a combination of heat, pressure, and adhesives. There are many laminates designed to be used with specific materials for different purposes.

Lamination - The process of binding together two or more layers of material by means of one or more of the following: heat, pressure and adhesive bonding.

Landscape Format - An image or sign panel where the length is appreciably greater than the height is said to be in landscape format.

Latex Ink - A new type of water-borne inkjet inks outdoor wide-format printing applications. The inks contain about 70% water, 30% co-solvents, pigments and latex polymer particles that form a film and bind with substrates with the application of heat.

Layout - The overall arrangement of the graphics and lettering on the face of a sign.

Letter Spacing - A typographic term for the space between letters and words.

Light Box - A sign that is self enclosed in a typically square or rectangular structure and houses an internal light system for illumination of the sign face. (See also box sign.)

Line Spacing - A typographic term for the space between lines or blocks of text.

Logo - A visually distinctive name and/or symbol that identifies a business, product or service. (See also trademark.)

Magnetic Sheeting - A layer of magnetic material laminated to a flexible surface material such as vinyl that can be printed with lettering and graphics. Magnetic sheeting is commonly used for temporary signage that can be placed on the side of vehicles or other metal surfaces.

Margin - The space between the any lettering or graphics and the border of the sign face.

Matte - Having a dull or non-shiny surface or finish.

MDO (Medium Density Overlay) - An exterior grade plywood sheet that has been given a resin-impregnated overlay on one or both sides to improve its paintability.

Menu Board - A changeable point-of-purchase sign that provides a list of products and prices. It is a type of sign commonly seen in sandwich shops and other fast service restaurants where it is used to display the menu.

Mesh - Any fabric or woven material having a loose or open weave.

Mock-Up - A sign mock-up is created to test and review in detail the appearance, legibility and other aspects of a final design.

Mural - A wall surface that has been decorated with a direct application of paint, tile or printed graphics.

Negative Space - Empty or unused space (having no lettering or graphics) within the sign face. (Also called white space. See also positive space.)

Opaque - Describes any material or substance through which light does not pass, i.e. it is neither transparent nor translucent.

Out Gas - The escape of gases from a solid or liquid which occurs naturally over time.

Panel - Any visible surface of a sign on which copy and/or art is present. One or more panels make up the sign face.

Pantone Matching System (PMS) - A standardized color scheme used in the printing industry to ensure the consistency of color from design to final print.

Partial Vehicle Wrap can be applied to any portion of your vehicle. Partial vehicle wraps typically use the color of the vehicle to incorporate the decals or graphics and use between $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the vehicle.

Pavement Graphics - Graphics and markings applied to roadways and parking areas to guide and manage traffic and to supplement other traffic signs.

PDAA is made up of over 100 companies in the US (only three in Arizona) that are independently certified to provide expert graphic installation and adhere to industry standard for vinyl graphic application. Being a member of the PDAA requires each company to pass vinyl installation proficiency tests on a myriad of surfaces and demonstrate diverse product experience. The PDAA is recognized as the certifying body for virtually all major vinyl manufacturers.

Pennant - A triangular flag. (See also banner.)

Permit - A legal document (license) granted by the appropriate government agency that gives official permission to take a specific action, e.g. erect a sign.

Permanent Adhesive - Not intended to be removed.

Pictogram - A symbol or simple illustration used to represent an object or concept. Commonly found in ADA and DOT signage. An example of a pictogram would be the wheelchair symbol seen on some ADA signs, the presence of which indicates a handicap accessible location.

Plastic - A generic term for a wide range of synthetic materials which consist of long chains of polymers that are moldable and soften when heated. Many plastics used in the sign industry are of the thermoplastic variety, which means they can melt and solidify repeatedly.

Plexiglass - The trade name for a brand of acrylic sheeting, which (like Kleenex) is often mistakenly used as a generic term.

Plywood - A common type of wood product sold in 4' x 8' sheets. Plywood is made of a number of thin sheets of wood laminated together with the grain of the adjacent layers perpendicular, except for the two outside plies, which are parallel to provide stability.

PMS (Pantone Matching System) - A standardized color scheme used in the printing industry to ensure the consistency of color from design to final print.

Point-of-Purchase (POP) Sign - In-store advertising designed to stimulate impulse purchases by shoppers inside a store. The term applies to a store's internal sign system, as well as special displays and dispensers created by and for specific product manufacturers. Also known as "point-of-sale advertising."

Pole Sign - A freestanding sign, usually double-faced, mounted on a round pole, square tube, or other fabricated member without any type of secondary support.

Polyester - A synthetic fiber used for its strength and resistance to ultraviolet deterioration. It does not have the stretch and elasticity of nylon and, as a result, will often last longer. Used for dye sublimation, screen printing, or applique.

Portable Sign - A freestanding, on-premise sign, not designed to be permanently affixed in place. These could include free-standing signs or notices as well as point-of-purchase signs.

Portrait Format - Proportion of a sign in which height is appreciably longer than width. (See also landscape format.)

Positive Space - The copy and art on a sign face. The opposite of negative space.

Post and Panel Sign - A sign panel with one or more posts.

Post Mounted Sign - A sign that is attached to one or more sign poles.

Poster - a sign typically printed on paper and intended for indoor use. Other substrates used for posters include plastic and cloth.

PPI (Pixels per Inch) - The number of pixels in a raster image that will occur in one line in the span of one inch. The higher the PPI, the greater the resolution and the less distinguishable each pixel becomes.

Pressure Activated Adhesive - Slideable until firm pressure is applied.

Pressure Sensitive Adhesive - Adheres upon contact to the substrate, does not slide and cannot be repositioned

Primary Colors - The three colors from which all other colors can be created. In paint pigments, the primary colors are yellow, red and blue. In four-color process printing, all colors are mixed from yellow, magenta(red) and cyan(blue). In light, the primary colors are red, green and blue. See also RGB display, additive colors.

Prototype - Usually a full-sized sample that uses final materials, methods of construction, fasteners and finishes to test assembly, design, construction and appearance issues. Also used to approve the "first sample" in a long production run.

PVC - Polyvinyl Chloride. A plastic used for many purposes.

Pylon Sign - A freestanding sign that is not a pole or ground sign.

Quality Assurance - All those planned and systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product or service will satisfy given requirements for quality.

Readability - The quality of a sign's overall design that allows the viewer to correctly interpret the information presented on it. Also, the optimum time and distance in which this can be done. Letter size and style, legibility of typeface, color contrast between letters and background, and a sign's layout all contribute to readability. (See also conspicuity.)

Reflective Sheeting - Film with very small glass or glasslike bead materials encapsulated below its surface, creating the ability to bounce light beams back to their source, such as from a car headlight back to the driver.

Reflectorized Sign - A sign that has been coated with a highly reflective material. (See also reflective sheeting.)

Registered Trademark - A trademark that has been officially registered with the government by its owner. Indicated by the symbol ®. (See also trademark.)

Registration - 1. In printing, the correct placement of the image to be printed on the substrate. 2. In multicolor printing, registration also refers to the correct alignment of the colors with one another.

Removable Adhesive - Can be removed with heat leaving minimal residue, in some instances chemicals are also required for removal.

Rendering - An artistic sketch or representation of a design concept.

Repositionable - Easy to remove and reapply without heat or aid, in some instances firm pressure can eliminate this feature.

Resolution - 1. In digital images, the number of pixels shown on a screen; the higher the number of pixels in a given space (i.e., the greater the density of pixels), the more precise the pictured image. 2. In plotting, the degree of accuracy with which a plotter will place a knife-head in relation to a theoretical, perfect location of a coordinate.

Roof Sign - A sign structure that is erected on or above a roof or that is installed directly on a roof's surface

Sandwich Sign - A moveable sign not secured or attached to the ground or surface upon which it is located, but supported by its own frame and most often forming the cross-sectional shape of an A. (Also known as sidewalk sign.)

Sans Serif - Any typeface that lacks serifs. In most sans serif fonts, there is little differentiation between the width of strokes within the letter. Helvetica and Futura are familiar sans serif fonts.

Schematic Design - A conceptual design developed at the beginning of a project which demonstrates a design approach or strategy. (Also known as schematics.)

Scoring - Cutting or notching a material prior to bending it. Sufficient scoring of some substrates will also allow them to be broken cleanly without cutting them all the way through.

Screen Printing- Graphic application method capable of printing great detail and color on a variety of substrates such as paper, plastics, aluminum, vinyl, and banner materials

Seam - A line formed by the joining together of two separate pieces of the same or different materials at their edges.

Serif - A small line or embellishment finishing off the strokes of letters in some fonts (like this one). Well-known serif fonts include Souvenir, Times Roman and Garamond.

Shade - A color made darker than the original by adding black to it.

Shadow - Duplication of an image that is slightly offset. Drop shadow is a simple copy and offset; block shadow joins the outlines of the original and duplicate to create a 3D-relief effect; and cast shadow alters the shape and size of the duplicate to imitate shadows cast from varied placement of light, as the sun does on a sundial.

Sidewalk Sign - A moveable sign not secured or attached to the ground or surface upon which it is located, but supported by its own frame and most often forming the cross-sectional shape of an A. (Also known as sandwich sign.)

Sign - Any device, structure, display or placard which is affixed to, placed on or in proximity to, or displayed from within a building to attract the attention of the public for the purposes for advertising, identifying or communicating information about goods and services.

Sign Band - A horizontal area above a multi-tenant building entrance, architecturally designed to accommodate signage in a signcentric manner.

Sign Cabinet - The enclosure of an electric sign, not including the components and mounting structure. (See also box sign and light box.)

Sign Can - An informal term for sign cabinet

Sign Code - A sign code may be part of a government body's land use planning regulations, or it may be a separate document designed to interact with other land use codes. As part of the police powers granted to local governments, a sign code normally seeks to promote the health, safety and welfare of the public. Sign codes may regulate size, placement, illumination, structure and aesthetics of sign content and design.

Sign Face - Typically refers to the most prominent message area of a sign but may refer generically to any message area. (Also called face. See also panel.)

Signage - Interchangeable terms used to describe signs. Any group of posted commands, warnings, information or directions.

Silhouette - The overall shape or profile of a sign, or a block of copy within a sign.

Silk Screen - Graphics accurately transferred to a background material or substrate through the use of screens cut specifically for the application. Ink is spread evenly over the top of the screen and "printed" onto the face of the substrate or material.

Silkscreening - One of the oldest and simplest forms of printing. A print is made using a squeegee to force ink through stencil or emulsion that is supported by fabric that has been stretched over a frame to create a screen. Several synthetic fabrics have replaced silk as the fabric of choice for screen printers. (See also screen printing.)

Simple Curves - Surface with a double dimensional curve.

Single Face Sign - A sign consisting of one face, rather than back-to-back faces on a common frame or back-to-back messages on the same piece of material.

Skeleton - The metal frame on which a sign is installed.

Snipe - An overlay added to an existing sign, vehicle, etc. as an additional message to the main medium, for example a band across a corner saying "coming soon."

Solvent - A petroleum-based liquid used to modify oil-based paints and inks and to remove them from sign components, frames and brushes.

Solvent Ink - Inks that use a carrier made of various chemicals that penetrate material, but evaporate quickly. Printers using solvent-based inks emit Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and should be ventilated. Can also be referred to as hard, or true solvents

Spacer - Any device used in mounting letters or signs that separates them from the surface to which they are being installed. A spacer allows letters to be pinned out.

Specifications - May include General Requirements, Products and Execution sections for sign specification package. Similar to architectural construction format per CSI (Construction Specifications Institute) standards.

Spinner Sign - A sign, either freestanding or wall-mounted, where the messages rotate in the wind. A spinner sign is not considered an animated sign.

Squeegee - a hard plastic or nylon blade used to apply pressure to increase surface adhesion between cutting vinyl and the transfer tape or between the vinyl and sign face or vehicles.

Stainless Steel - As the name implies, this is a special steel alloy that is made more stainless than regular steel, due to higher concentrations of chromium and nickel.

Stand-Offs - Insulators that support a neon tube, as well as hold it away from the background surface and provide some impact resistance. (See also supports).

Stationary Sign - A sign that is not readily moveable or portable.

Stencil - A thin sheet of material into which a design is cut. When a stencil is placed on another substrate and paint or ink is applied, the image represented by the cut-out portion of the stencil is printed on the substrate below it.

Strain - The measure of the change in size or shape of a body under stress, compared to its original size or shape. It is usually measured as the change (in inches) per inch of length.

Streamer - A long, narrow banner included in interior or window displays only.

Structure - In the sign industry, a fabrication designed for and capable of supporting a sign. Can refer to internal or external skeleton (exoskeleton) of sign as well as support pole or mechanism.

Styrene - Refers to polystyrene, a usually colorless, rigid plastic that can be molded into objects, used in the manufacture of signs.

Substrate - The surface to which graphics are applied. Can be plastics, metals, vinyls, banners, fabrics, papers, glass and many more.

Symmetry - The balance of design elements in which one side equals or mirrors the other.

Tack - The stickiness of an adhesive under a given condition. Some adhesives require a particular temperature range for maximum tack.

Tagged Image File Format (TIFF) - Standard graphics file format used for scanned bit-mapped images.

Target Audience - The profile of the most desired consumer prospects for a product or service, listed by characteristics such as demography, lifestyle, brand or media consumption, purchase behavior, etc. This is common to all media.

Template - A full-sized pattern, layout or computerized output showing the exact size and placement of letters. Typically used for installing dimensional letters, signs or architectural elements.

Temporary Sign - Any sign that is not intended to be permanently installed. Banners and signs at construction sites are good examples of temporary signs.

Often, sign codes seek to limit the length of time a temporary sign can remain in place.

Tensile Strength - The maximum load a material can withstand before it breaks. (Also called breaking strength.)

Thumbnail - A type of rough sketch of a design made prior to developing more finalized presentations. Some sign artists prepare several thumbnail sketches of a job, varying their layouts and fonts, before preparing one or two more complete ideas to take to a client.

TIFF (Tagged Image File Format) - standard graphics file format used for scanned bit-mapped images.

Tiling - The digital process of dividing a large image into individual sections to print with overlap.

Tint - A color made lighter than the original by adding white to it.

Tone - The effect on a color brought about by blending it with another color.

Tracking - The ability of a computer, at the operator's instruction, to add or subtract minute increments of space between letters. (See also letter spacing and kerning.)

Trademark - Used by a business to distinguish itself and its products from competition. A trademark may include a name, symbol, word or combination of those. Protected by the federal government and considered to have financial value, a sign maker should only reproduce a trademark with the company's permission and should discourage customers who seek to imitate well-known trademarks too closely. (See also logo and registered trademark.)

Traffic Count - The estimated number of people who will see a sign in a given time period. Traffic count is most commonly associated with number of vehicles passing a location in a day.

Transfer Tape - A medium-tack adhesive coated on translucent paper. Transfer tape is placed on weeded vinyl images still on the original carrier liner; the tack of the tape is stronger than the adhesion of the vinyl to the coated liner, so the image is pulled off the liner in a transfer to another surface. (Also referred to as premask or application tape)

Translucent - The property of a material such as vinyl, paint or ink that allows the passage of some light through it without being transparent. Internally illuminated signs rely on translucent paints and vinyls

Transparent - The property of a material that allows light and images through and may also show a color tint.

Tunneling - The separation of a laminate from a substrate, appearing in a straight line/channel, due to insufficient adhesion, inadequate tension/stability during application, inadequate quality of substrate or improper curing after application.

Typeface - A set of letters and numerals sharing the same design characteristics. Examples of font sets include Times New Roman and Arial. (Also called font.)

UASG is 3M's certifying body for graphic installation companies. The UASG is a separate entity from 3M that works closely with the vinyl manufacturer to ensure installers practice proper graphic installation techniques.

UV Ink - UV-curable inks are "cured" once they are exposed to wavelengths of UV light. The ink consists of a photo initiator, and when exposed to the UV light, it undergoes a chemical process that transforms the ink into a solid film that tightly adheres directly onto the substrate's surface.

UV Resistance - Ability to withstand decay due to the damaging effect of the ultraviolet rays of the sun.

Vinyl - Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) film that, in sign making, is backed with an adhesive that creates a strong bond to a surface when pressure is applied. Many different integral colors are available with adhesives having different levels of aggressiveness (adhesion) for various applications from permanent to semi-permanent to temporary.

Vinyl High Performance Cast - The choice for vehicle installs worldwide. This cast vinyl conforms to rivets and complex curves. Spot or full color graphics will look great on your fleet for years. Many grades and brands available with various purposes and warranties.

Vinyl Intermediate - Indoor or outdoor applications with either spot or full color graphics. An excellent choice for short or medium term outdoor signs such as industrial site signs. Many brands and grades available for different purposes and with different warranties.

Vinyl Letters - Letters cut from adhesive-backed material, in dozens of opaque, translucent, metallized, and transparent colors and patterns.

Vinyl Perforated Window - A perforated white vinyl composite Generally warranted for 1 year.

Vinyl Reflective - Outdoor applications; adhesive backed vinyl. Reflects light at night allowing by add 40% more visibility to your message. Many different brands and warranties available.

Visibility - The ability of the observer to distinguish an item from its surrounds or background.

Wall Mounted Sign - A single-face sign mounted on a wall. (See also wall sign.)

Wall Sign - In the most literal sense, a sign that is put on a wall. The term is often expanded to include flat signs that are placed on or attached to the wall of a building. These latter signs are also called fascia-mounted signs and wall mounts. (Also known as a wall mounted sign.)

Water Resistant - Describing a face that has been treated to make it resistant to damage or deterioration caused by water.

Weave - The configuration of threads running perpendicular to one another. A plain weave places weft thread over the warp thread in sequence, then reverses for the next row of threads.

Webbing - A sturdy fabric woven in narrow widths for use where strength is required, such as seat belts or headbands. Often used in banners, where heavy duty usage is required, like over-the-street banners.

Weed - The process of peeling extraneous vinyl or matrix way from a plotter cut, leaving only the sections representing the final image. Pulling the extra material away in one quick stroke is known as "rip weeding."

Weep Hole - A small opening or hole in the bottom of a letter or a sign cabinet, placed at the lowest point to prevent water from accumulating in a unit.

Weld - The process that connects pieces of material by heating until molten and fusing together.

White Space - Empty or unused space (having no lettering or graphics) within the sign face. (Also called negative space. See also positive space.)

Wickability - The property of a fiber that allows moisture to move rapidly along the fiber surface and pass quickly through the fabric.

Wind Load - The basic term for describing the design strength of a sign. Standard wind load is 30 PSF (pounds per square foot), which can withstand winds up to approximately 90 MPH. Heavy wind load is 55 PSF, which can withstand approximately 110 MPH.

Window Sign - A sign that is mounted for display on a window and intended to be viewed from the outside. wood lag screws

Screws which are tapered to a point and do not utilize nuts. Their strength is proportional to the hardness of the wood in which they are embedded. In many awning applications that require fastening to wood framing, wood lag screws may be the best available option.

Word Space - Horizontal space between words.

X-Height - In a given typeface, the height of the lowercase letters which do not have ascenders or descenders.

Yield - In production, the amount of material utilized versus what is wasted or dropped.

- Yield - 1. In regulatory signs pertaining to traffic flow, concede right of way.
2. In production, the amount of material utilized versus what is wasted or dropped.

R

Reflective Sheeting - Film with very small glass or glasslike bead materials encapsulated below its surface, creating the ability to bounce light beams back to their source, such as from a car headlight back to the driver.

Reflectorized Sign - A sign that has been coated with a highly reflective material. (See also reflective sheeting.)

Registered Trademark - A trademark that has been officially registered with the government by its owner. Indicated by the symbol ®. (See also trademark.)

Registration - 1. The correct placement of the image to be printed on the substrate.
2. In multicolor printing, registration also refers to the correct alignment of the colors with one another.