



## Sign Fab's Sign Industry Reference Guide: Chapter 1

This reference guide is to help gain understanding about the types of products in the sign industry and the type of terminology used as well as some new products that are now available. We hope you use this guide as a reference point!

Chapter One of the Reference Guide covers the sign types we manufacture and the terminology used among sign professionals. There are many different types of signs, but we kept this limited to what we manufacture just so this Chapter isn't exceedingly long. All sign types are alphabetically ordered and have an image associated with the text for better understanding. Let us know at [advertising@signfab.com](mailto:advertising@signfab.com) if you have any suggestions or if you think we left anything out!

### SIGN TYPES



**BLADE SIGN** - A type of projecting sign mounted such that the face of the sign is perpendicular to the normal flow of traffic.



**CABINET** – This type of sign uses a shaped box to encase the sign. The shape may be as simple as a rectangle or as intricate as you can create. Cabinets are often double-sided and contain either square tube railing or a false back in the center of the can to illuminate both sides.



**CHANNEL LETTER** – Channel Letters are currently the number one choice of sign identification for business professionals. These products can be used for internal and external storefronts. Sign Fab offers a complete range of channel letter products, typestyles, and custom logos. Our channel letter accessories offer you diversity, providing your customer with a wide range of options.



**CONTOUR CHANNEL** – This is almost like the standard channel letter sign, but the main difference is the letters of the sign are all on one piece of acrylic; the letters or cans are not separated. Our machines are capable of producing a large variety of contour channel signs.



**CUSTOM LOGO** – This is constructed from aluminum, has an acrylic face, and is most often in the form of a custom contour logo (the shape of the can follows the shape of the logo). Sign Fab can produce almost any custom logo regardless of the shape or size.



**FLAT CUT** – This sign can be a logo or letters. This type of sign is a non-illuminated letter or logo cut from a metal sheet or plate stock that is square tube mounted.



**FRONT/BACK LIT** – This form of sign can fall under any of the above categories, but also has light shining through the back, similar to a reverse channel sign. The face is acrylic, and the backs are typically clear polycarbonate. Two different colors of LEDs can be accomplished by adding a false back – a divider – in the can.



**PUSH-THRU** – A cabinet or capsule made from aluminum with a routed cut-out that allows for routed acrylic to push through the cut-out. This allows for a glow right around the pushed through acrylic onto the aluminum surface.



**REVERSE CHANNEL** – This sign features an aluminum face and return, but a clear polycarbonate back allows the lighting to create a halo effect around the letters or logos.



**SELF-CONTAINED** - Self-Contained Letters are ideal for large channel letter projects generally between 3' and 10'. Each letter contains its own transformers and is pre-assembled for easy installation.

## SIGN TERMINOLOGY

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### Access Door

A hinged or removable panel that when opened provides access to the interior of a sign allowing for the inspection and servicing of its internal components. (Also called access panel.)

### Access Panel

A hinged or removable panel that when opened provides access to the interior of a sign allowing for the inspection and servicing of its internal components. (Also called access door.)

### Acrylic

Type of material used to form faces.

**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.

**Anodized Finish**

A thin aluminum oxide coating applied electrochemically to the surface of a metal object. The coating hardens, protects and enhances the appearance of the object. An anodized finish can be created in a variety of colors.

**Architectural Signage**

A term used to describe signage in a built environment having the purpose of providing wayfinding or other site specific information.

**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.)

**Backlight Letter**

An illuminated reverse channel letter where the light from the letter is directed against and reflected off the surface behind the letter thereby producing a glowing effect around the letter. (Also referred to as halo lighting.)

**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.)

**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.)

**Blade Sign**

A type of projecting sign mounted such that the face of the sign is perpendicular to the normal flow of traffic.

**Cabinet Sign**

A sign structure consisting of the frame and face(s), not including the internal components, embellishments of support structure.

**Channel Letter**

A fabricated or formed three-dimensional letter that may accommodate a light source.

**CMYK**

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

**Dimensional Letters**

A formed or fabricated non-illuminated letter. Dimensional letters create lower profile identification than illuminated or channel letters, but offer a wide variety of uses at an economical price.

**Direct Illumination**

Illuminating a sign by means of an external light source directed at the sign face. (See also exterior illuminated sign.)

**Electric Sign**

Any sign that contains and utilizes electrical components.

**Embossed Plastic Sign Face**

A plastic sign face that has had three-dimensional lettering or graphical elements vacuum molded (embossed) into its surface. (Also called pan face.)

**Fabricate**

To manufacture a sign or major sign components.

**Fabricated Letter**

A dimensional letter typically fabricated from sheet metal.

**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.)

**Flat Cutout Letter**

A non-illuminated letter cut from a metal sheet or plate stock.

**Flex Face**

A sign face made of a flexible material stretched over a supporting frame. (See also flexible face material.)

**Front/Back Lit Letter**

A channel letter or logo lighting through the face and back side.

**Halo**

A glowing ring of light surrounding a object such as a channel letter which has been lit from behind. (See also halo lighting.)

**Halo Lighting**

A type of sign lighting where a light source located within or behind a sign is allowed to reflect off the mounting surface. The result is that the sign appears to be surrounded by a halo of light.

**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.)

**Interior Signs**

Signs that are located inside a building or other facility.

**Internally Illuminated Sign**

A sign that is illuminated by a light source that is contained inside the sign.

**JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts 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.

**LED**

Light Emitting Diode.

**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.

**Lightbox Signs**

General term for a traditional cabinet or box type sign made up of a face and back or two faces, with designs ranging from simple plastic faces to metal faces with push thru letters. Often called cabinet signs, lightboxes can be internally illuminated, externally illuminated or non-illuminated, and are good for both interior and exterior applications.

**Molded Letter**

A letter created by heating a sheet of acrylic or plastic until it is pliable and then shaping it into the desired form using a mold of the letter. After the plastic cools, it retains the molded shape and any excess material is trimmed away.

**Monument Sign**

A ground sign with low overall height. A monument is a detached, freestanding sign whose sign surface is attached to a proportionate solid base or structural frame.

**NEC**

National Electric Code.



**Opaque**

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

**Open Channel Letter**

A dimensional letter that has no face and illuminated with the light source visible (usually exposed neon). Should have a clear face for physical protection of internal components.

**Pan-Formed Face**

A plastic sign face molded into a three-dimensional shape. Also called molded face, molded and embossed face, molded and debossed 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.

**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.

**Photocell**

A dusk to dawn sensor that powers sign on and off.

**Pole Signs**

A freestanding sign with a visible support structure. Often called pylons, pole signs may be internally or externally illuminated and offer excellent visibility from a distance.

**Pre-Assembled**

Includes letter, face, LED; installed - customer to complete wiring to light.

**Preformed/Notched**

A term used to describe a machine notching method used in the way channel letters or box signs are manufactured.

**Prewired**

Includes letter, face, LED; installed and wired with whip ready to install.

**Raceway**

An electrical enclosure that may serve as a mounting structure for a sign and is ready for primary power.



### **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.

### **Remote**

A channel letter or logo that is installed directly to fascia, no wireway included.

### **Returns**

Channel walls that make up the body of the channel.

### **Reverse Channel Letter**

A fabricated dimensional letter with opaque face and side walls, back side non-illuminated or (halo) illuminated.

### **Roof Sign**

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

### **Routed Signs**

A sign created by the cutting away from a solid material such as stone or wood, where the lettering and / or design is cut down into the surface of the sign blank. Unlike hand carved pieces, routed signs generally refer to signs that are CNC routed or machine carved.

### **Sandblasted Signs**

A sign created by placing a rubber stencil over letters and images and etching the background with a high-pressure mix of sand and air. The lettering and design areas are then sanded smooth and painted.

### **Seam**

A line formed by the joining together of two separate pieces of the same or different materials at their edges, as with flexible-face fabric material or wood, metal or plastic sheet.

### **Self-Contained**

A channel letter or logo that is prewired with the power supply located inside the channel.

### **Serif**

A slight projection finished off a stroke of a letter or certain typefaces.

### **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 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.

**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.

**Stroke**

A line forming part of a written or printed character.

**Supports**

Insulators that support a neon tube, as well as hold it away from the background surface and provide some impact resistance.

**Theroforming**

A process that takes a flat sheet of material and gives it dimension by heating then forcing it into a mold either mechanically or pneumatically. See also vacuum-forming.

**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 vinyl's.

**Transparent**

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

**UL**

An abbreviation for Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory.

**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 Graphics**

An adhesive backed sign made of vinyl film, generally applied to windows, floors, displays or vehicles. Vinyl graphics can range from stock letters and die-cut decals to custom computer-cut lettering, logos, and full-color photo wraps.

**Vinyl Letters**

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

**Visibility**

The quality of a letter, number, graphic, or symbol, which enables the observer to distinguish it from its surrounds or background.

**Weeding**

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."

**Weld**

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

**Window Sign**

A sign that is mounted for display on a window and intended to be viewed from the outside.