

Guidelines For Creating Effective Signs

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Arcata, CA

- Test clarity and effectiveness by incorporating review processes that involve staff and the public
- Increase effectiveness by using language understood by the visitor: avoid “insider terminology”
- Keep text to a minimum
- Incorporate images and symbols to make emphasize the message
- Use symbols that are commonly understood
- Write text that demonstrates respect for the visitor and maintains their dignity
- Use the authority of the resource, not just the authority of the law
- Place signs where they are likely to be seen: avoid areas busy with signs or with distracting natural views
- Use multiple languages where appropriate
- Develop a “sign plan” to avoid “sign pollution”
- Use different shaped signs (e.g. fish shaped for interest or select a specific shape of one type of information)
- Incorporate humor where appropriate
- Coordinate with other local agencies to use the same sign and symbols
- When providing cautionary signs, include the desired behaviors