



# Designing Effective Outdoor Advertising

... for JGI Static and LED Billboards

The most important thing about your static or LED billboard design is its effectiveness when viewed from a distance. Unlike a magazine or newspaper ad that you can stare at if you want a closer look, you can't just slam on the brakes or throw the car into reverse to get a better look at a billboard, especially if you're in a 70 mph speed zone. You've only got about 5 seconds. 5 whole seconds to get your advertising message across.

Want to ensure that your billboard is both eye-catching and effective? Read on.




**Be Brief. Be Simple. Be Clear.**

**Your billboard design should contain just 3 components:**

- compelling focal point
- captivating copy line
- company name/contact info.

*Designing a great billboard requires the willpower to leave off the clutter.*

*Suggestions for creating an effective, clutter-free billboard follow ...*

## **Rule for Outdoor Copy: Be Quick or Be Dead**

Focus your message on one single idea. Advertising copy should be kept to 7 to 10 words and should be concise to register quickly in the minds of a moving audience. Use short words whenever possible. An average driver will only have 5 to 10 seconds to view your billboard. Make those seconds count!





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## Rule for Color: High Contrast in Hue and Value

One of the biggest advantages about advertising on a billboard is that the colors are vividly and brilliantly reproduced on the printed vinyl. High contrasting bold colors work best for viewing from a distance, and help your ad get noticed. For example, light colors on a dark background or dark colors on a light background so the words and images will “pop”. Rule out most pastels as they aren’t effective. Designs with brilliant color contrast can improve recall by 38%.



**Design Tip:**

Some color pairings don’t work very well on billboards because they blend together and vibrate to distort the message, as illustrated below. To determine if your color pairings have good contrast, test them by making a black and white photo copy of your design. If it reads well in black and white, it should read well when printed in color.



**CONTRAST**

**HIGH VISIBILITY**



**VIBRATION**

**LOW VISIBILITY**

### STATIC BILLBOARD COLORS

The chart below shows the top 14 color combinations representing the best use of color for readability on a **STATIC Billboard**. Example 1 has the highest legibility. Example 14 has the lowest legibility of the recommended color combinations.



### LED BILLBOARD COLORS

Refer to the samples to the right for the best text color vs. background color combinations for your **LED billboard**. Avoid using white backgrounds when designing for LED billboards as white will appear muddy. On a digital billboard, a white background does not carry the same vibrancy as it does on a static billboard.

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P

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## **Rule for Font Type: Easy to read.**

Fonts that work best on billboards are simple, sans serif fonts that have the same thickness throughout each character. Avoid overly bold or thin lettering. Thin fonts fade away and are often invisible from a distance and heavy fonts blur together. Billboards are not the place to experiment with fancy fonts. Ornate and elaborate script fonts are difficult to read from any distance, as are *Italics*. The use of ALL CAPITAL LETTERS should be avoided or kept to a minimum as the brain has difficulty processing quickly words in ALL CAPS.

*To the right is an illustration of what characteristics make some fonts easier to read on a billboard than others.*

BAD FONT	GOOD FONT
Thick AND Thin	Uniform Stroke
Bad Serif	Good Serif
<i>Script</i>	<b>No Script</b>
Too Tight	Just Right
<b>Too Fat</b>	<b>Bold not Fat</b>
Too Thin	Thin No More

FONTS

*Readable*

**Verdana**

Helvetica

**Tahoma**

**Gill Sans**

**Berlin Sans**

**Franklin**

*Un-readable*

**Harrington**

**ALGERIAN**

**Baskerville**

**Revie**

**Rockwell**

**Harlow**

*To the left are examples of fonts on color pairings, which produce optimum readability, as well as some fonts that you should NOT use.*

## **Rule for Font Size: BIG.**

Any words or text that are vital should be as big as possible. Billboards are far away, across the highway or way up in the sky. Big is not the same as tall. Tall, slim letters are less legible than shorter standard letters. Magazine and newspaper ads will often utilize the “white space/negative space” rule which allows open space for a clean visual effect; however, when designing a billboard ad, this rule does NOT apply. Use available “whitespace/negative space” to make the few elements you are using as huge as possible.



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## **Rule for Spacing: Adequate Spacing.**

The use of the right amount of space between letters, words and lines will enhance visibility.

Letters spaced way out can be difficult to read. Placing letters too close to one another causes them to attach together visually resulting in phrases to be misread. Example: clear morn will be viewed as dear mom. Sufficient space between letters (kerning) increases legibility from a distance.



## **Final Test:**

Colors on a computer monitor don't match printed colors. Do not use your computer monitor for your final view. Before submitting your final approved artwork, print the artwork out in color on 8 1/2" x 11" paper and tape the artwork to the wall, and stand 15 feet away. What you are able to easily read will be what travelers will be able to easily read as they drive by your billboard.

## **Photos**

## **Rule for Photos or Graphics: GO BIGGER.**

Stick to only one large image or photo that supports your message. One dynamic image will have much more impact than multiple smaller images. An image isn't necessary, but if you use one keep it simple and remember, most images and logos captured from websites, Google Images, and camera phones have too low of a resolution. These images and logos look fine on screen, but when enlarged and printed on a billboard will look fuzzy or jagged. Images and logos should have a minimum resolution of 300 dpi. Make sure your images are high resolution, bold, clear, easily recognizable and illustrate your message. Choose a good photo to communicate your great message.



*There are few exceptions to these tips and recommendations — when a billboard is very close to the road, when a billboard is visible from a traffic light where people might be stopped and*

*have time to read everything on the billboard, or when text needs to be included as a disclaimer for legal reasons, but for the most part, these recommendations apply to all outdoor advertising.*

**In a world full of advertising clutter, larger-than-life billboards stand out.  
JGI Billboards Get Noticed.**