



BACKBONE CAMPAIGN'S ACTIVIST GUIDE TO GIANT FREEWAY OVERPASS BANNERING THE PEOPLE'S BILLBOARD

Constructing Giant Deer Fence Banners

Freeway bannering is a powerful tool for activists. It's inexpensive, most of the required material is reusable, and it's an effective way to reach thousands, even tens of thousands, of people in a short period of time.

A few general tips:

- Keep messages brief enough to be read and comprehended at 65 mph.
- Do it safely. Do not suspend signs directly over traffic where they could fall onto the freeway. If there is fencing, hang the sign on the *inside* of the fencing if allowed by local law enforcement.
- Keep letters at least 8 inches tall so they can be easily read. We utilize 16-17 inch tall letters.
- Construct banners so that they can survive high winds. Freeway overpasses in particular tend to be windy spots.
- Watch your backdrop. Make sure there is nothing directly behind the banner that could make it hard to read. (Although the orange color is visible on muddled backdrops, it's most readable by drivers and passengers looking up at it with the sky as the background).
- Although this method of making banners makes it possible to change messages reusing materials, keep in mind that it can take several hours to make the change, depending on how many helpers you have—so you may not want to change messages frequently.
- If the police request you to leave, you can either leave or request a ticket. The ticket will give you the opportunity in court to argue that freeway bannering is a free speech issue. Most officers won't give you a ticket, but they may make safety requirements—such as not hanging the banner over the fence or tying the banner to the overpass.
- Go for numbers. Having a crowd of people gathered around the banner—especially when wearing bright safety vests—helps increase visibility.
- Be prepared with enough volunteers to hold up the banner on the poles—you'll get more notice and response from traffic if you have people with the banner.
- If it is a windy day, have extra volunteers so that as people get tired, they can be relieved and rotate volunteers through.

How to Make a Freeway Banner

Tools / Materials:

- Scissors—heavy duty
- Hole-Punchers, two hole-punchers come in your kit
- Small wire cutters or utility knives for snipping zip ties off of the poles

- Drill for making holes in PVC pipe
- **About 30 black zip ties** (sometimes called tie wraps or cable ties) (at least 7” long) or equivalent number of sections of repurposed used bicycle tire tubes.
- Duct Tape
- Fine Sharpie for tracing letter templates onto Typar
- Poles (*See Banner Deployment Instructions on pros and cons of each type*).

Constructing the Banner

Time for the work party! You will need an area that is at least the length of the banner.

Station 1 - Creating Stencils: Cut out the letter and number templates. You can use larger sized letters of the first letter of each word to visually break up the words (this is especially useful for urls), or use only uppercase letters for the first letter of each word and lowercase letters for the remaining letters of each word. NOTE: Your tool kit contains only large sized letters and numbers. If you need smaller case letters, download the character letter patterns from the link at Backbone’s DIY Bannering page (<http://www.backbonecampaign.org/banners>) and print off some of your own.

Station 2 - Tracing: Trace the letters onto the Typar using a permanent marker. Make sure the stencil is oriented correctly (we once had 9 ‘P’s we couldn’t use because someone mistakenly put the stencil backwards). We recommend strategically placing the stencils on your typar in a manner that conserves as much of this precious resource as possible.

Pro Tip: We recommend the following process for assessing and tracking how many of each letter you need to trace. First, write out your whole message. Then, vertically write out the alphabet and put a tally next to each letter to signify how many of each character in the alphabet you need to complete your message. Be careful to mark off the letters of the message as you are tracing covering all the letters needed for the message and not making extras.

[This handy online tool can generate a breakdown of how many of each letter in the alphabet you need.](http://www.backbonecampaign.org/banners)

>><https://jumk.de/wortanalyse/word-analysis.php><<

Station 3 - Letter Cutting: Cut the letters out of the Typar.

Station 4 - Hole Punching: We generally punch the holes such that there is ¼ of an inch or slightly more material between the edge of the typar and the edge of the hole punch. The center of the hole punch is also about a ½ inch (1 centimeter) in from the edge of the typar. This happy medium ensures the twist tie isn’t likely to pull out and it doesn’t crimp the material. Hole punch **all the corners of the letter** (otherwise letters will flap around in the wind) and then add additional holes every 8-10 inches. The number of holes depends on how many are necessary to keep the letter spread out (slightly taut) on the fence. **Punch as few as you need to affix it securely.** If you put a few extra holes whoever is tying doesn’t HAVE to use all of them.

Station 5 - Creating Twist Ties: Cut 6” twist ties—about 10 ties per letter. You can cut lots of twist ties fast by getting a 3 inch piece of cardboard and wrapping them around it a bunch of times, and then cutting the spool of twist ties in half. Use tin snips so you do not dull or break your scissors. NOTE: Your tool kit comes with enough Twist Ties to at least craft your first banner.

Station 6 - Twist Tying - Fold the twist ties in half and loop it through the hole of the letters, so the letters are ready to be attached to the banner once you’re ready for affixing. Twist once or twice and then leave the two ends dangling. **Pro Tip:** We prefer to leave enough space in the twist tie before twisting it to the letter so that it can pivot around the corners of the letter without pinching it. We usually fold it in half then back out ¼ of an inch before

twisting it.

Layout and Affixing the Letters to the Deer Fence:

Now you're ready to lay out the words of your banner onto the deer fence material. (*Check spelling NOW—not after you've attached the letters!*)

First, lay out on the floor or grass the the letters on what will be the longest line of text on the banner.

Leave a space of about a letter and a half width between each **word**. Make sure spacing between letters, words, and lines is adequate so that the message is centered, legible, and is visually pleasing. Counting squares from the top, as well as between letters, words, and lines makes this easy and keeps everything uniform. It takes a lot of time to adjust each letter if you find out midway that it doesn't look right. "Proper prior planning prevents piss-poor performance"- words to live by (shared by Solidarity Brigade Coordinator Phil Ateto).

When you are sure the words are laid out correctly, then twist tie it to the deer fence.

- When possible, affix the letters to the corner points of the squares in the deer fence (this allows for the letter to be secured both horizontally and vertically in on tie).
- Don't make the twist ties too taught. Leave a slight amount of slack in the twist tie so when you roll the banner up or winds tug on it it will have a little give and not rip out of the hole.
- 3 simple twists or wrapping the tie around the plastic netting a few times is usually sufficient. If you are going out on the water (winds are often higher) or when higher wind speeds are anticipated (like you're hoisting it with helium-filled weather balloons), you will want to make sure it's more secure (nothing too excessive, no sailor knots). Simple tying will make it a lot easier to change messages for the next occasion the banner is deployed and save the next crew some time!
- **Once all the letters are affixed we highly recommend two final quality assurance checks.** First, for all the letters, brush your hands along or very gently tug at each of the points of the letters to physically check all the twist ties were affixed. Lastly, to visually check the ties were all affixed, lift the banner off the floor and invert it so that it's suspended upside down in the air with the orange part of the letters facing the ground. Doing so will allow you to see if any ends of the letters flop down from twist ties that weren't attached.

Voila, you've created a massive banner without waiting for paint to dry or relying on skilled artists!

Don't forget to download and print off copies of the deployment instructions from Backbone's DIY Bannering page (<http://www.backbonecampaign.org/banners>)