Choosing the poles for your banners

**Wooster Extension Poles** 8-16 ft poles are great because they have a Hexagonal aluminum inner pole that is more durable and adjusts in 6 inch increments with a button versus a twist lock.

**Pro-Lock Extension Poles** 23 foot extension pole by Mr. Longarm is longer which is better for mobilizing banners above folks heads or as a backdrop for a rally/speakers. They have 3 sections. There are a couple potential drawbacks: the twist lock can be a little challenging if over tightened, the aluminum poles if abused or used in really challenging conditions could be more likely bend than would the hexagonal shape of the Wooster poles, and we have had some fail over the years where the red threaded part broke (we were able to secure it by trimming the length of black fastener and securing the red threaded part with a hose clamp and it’s worked fine since).

Either pole costs approximately $36-43 each.

**Non Adjustable Plastic Poles:** If you want to go super low budget you can also use black ABS or white PVC poles around 2 inches in diameter or so (if going with smaller diameter PVC check that it doesn’t bend too much). At some hardware stores you can get these in lengths longer than 10 ft and cut to preferred length. If you get a standard length of 10 feet and don’t drill into it you can probably return it. They generally charge you by the foot. (10 feet is probably under $10). The drawback is that it’s non adjustable, you can’t get your message as high and transporting it may be more challenging.

**Bamboo:**
(+ ) It’s renewable and plentiful in the Northwest. You can get all different sizes. Lightweight and strong if dried properly.
(- ) Not Adjustable. Not as durable. Ideally have to wait after harvesting for it to dry out.

**Small diameter PVC for Smaller Personal Banners:**
(+ ) Using 1-inch and 1 and ¼ -inch PVC poles, you can create an adjustable extension pole. They nest well into each other. They are cheap compared to other extension poles.
(- ) One drawback is that they may not be quite as sturdy if using long segments.
Affixing the Banner to Poles

For affixing the Deer Fence banner to the poles, we invite you to embrace your punk rock nature / inner MacGyver!

Zip ties and duct tape are two pieces of our utility belt that we never travel without. When it comes to quickly rigging the deer fence banners they are an easy go to tool that volunteers feel familiar with using. Our friends at 350 Seattle also recommend using repurposed bicycle tires as ties in place of the zip ties and duct tape (see write-up below on how to create rubber ties).

You'll want to lay out the deer fence banner on the ground so the orange side of the letters is facing the ground. Then lay out the appropriate number of vertical poles.

If using extension poles - Invert the poles so that the handle part of the pole is facing the top of the banner and the part that extends is on the bottom (orient the pole so the point you'd normally attach a paint roller to is towards the bottom of the banner). This orientation ensures that the mechanism for extending the pole is more accessible and allows you to extend the poles without having to adjust the placement of poles on the deer fence banner after you’ve affixed them to one-another.

We zip tie the deer fence to these poles in around 4 -5 places. No need to wrap the banner around the poles, as long as the zip ties go over one full square of the deer fence you should be in great shape. One important thing is to make sure the bottom and top are taut. The zip ties tend to slip a little bit so wrap the top and bottom zip ties of each pole with the duct tape.

How high you want the banner is partially determined by the site at which you’re bannering, what background there is, what obstacles there may be like trees or signs. To determine how high you want your poles to be, figure how high you want the bottom of the banner to be from the ground or above a railing so that the letters are unobstructed and easy to read. If you’re at a rally, the bottom of the banner should be above the heads of rally participants and the signs they are likely to hold. Then extend the poles to that length. Make sure all the poles are the same height or it will skew the message. When affixing the poles make sure the orange letters are face down on the ground so that you can attach the poles to the back of the fencing material so it doesn't obstruct the letters.

Height:

- In most instances, ideally the bottom of the fencing will be 7’+ from the base of the poles so the message rises above the crowd in a march or rally.
- When Freeway bannering, the bottom of the fencing should be 5’+ from the base of the poles so that it’s above the guard fence of an overpass.
- For use on the water, you will want the message a bit lower (3-5’) from the bottom as it can be difficult to get the leverage necessary to raise and support the banner with longer poles and a message that is further up.

Creating Rubber Ties Tutorial:

Rubber ties are incredibly useful and can be reused for many purposes!!

Procuring rubber ties - You can get old bicycle tires at your local bike shop, they regularly amass a bunch of tubes no longer good for riding on. Take them home and turn them into strips.

Cutting the Ties-

- Put the tires inflation stem into a vise, or fully secure that stem in some way like with a vice clamp, such that it stays where you put it.
● Now cut the tire tube in half at the stem so you no longer have a loop. Instead you now have a long strip of rubber tube secured at one end. (Avoid using tires that have a goopy sealant for holes it may have endured).
● Utilize a sharp utility knife.
● While holding the inner tube, pull on it to stretch the rubber against the securement.
● Insert the knife through the tube that your pulling on.
● Carefully walk backwards away from the secured stem backwards so the inner tube pulls through your hand as you slice it with the utility knife.
● Get to the end of the tube and let it go.
● **Do this action in a smooth manner so that you don’t get jagged cuts or other nics in the rubber which could lead to the rubber tie prematurely failing in the future.**
● There is likely some powder that the manufacturer puts in the tube. When you release the rubber it may make a puff in the air. We like to think of it as baby powder, though we’re not sure why it’s there or what it is. We recommend you avoid breathing in the powder.
● Now you have two strips of rubber, still attached to the vise or your clamp.
● If this is a mountain bike tube then you can go back to the tube and cut it two more times. This results in 4 strips of rubber, still attached to that vise (or clamp)
● If, the original tube was for road bikes then the original cut, which created two strips of rubber is ready to cut down into pieces of appropriate size.
● You decide now what the appropriate length is that you’d like the strands of rubber to be. If we’re tying a bunch of poles together, we like a piece of rubber tie about 18 to 20 inches long. If we’re tying a deer fence banner to a pole, we like a 12 to 14 inch piece of rubber tie.

**One final rubber tie tip:** when using the rubber ties utilize a bow or slip knot to facilitate easier removal at the end of your action.

*Thanks to Peter Weston for sharing his insights for the rubber tie tutorial and Lisa Marcus for turning us on to this reusable and up-cycled resource!*

---

**Mobilizing Your Freeway Banner**

**Keeping the banner readable and preventing sagging:**

Now you have a choice. **Either way you need to keep the top of the banner taut when you mobilize it; there are two main ways we commonly do that.**

1. If you have fewer people, and you don't have to rapidly deploy the banner, or you can easily walk it to the site you want to set it up at, then you can use two extension poles along the top to keep the banner from sagging or drooping between the upright poles. Extend the middle section of the remaining long arm poles and lay them along the top such that the deer fence is fully extended and the poles overlap the outside upright poles a few inches and the extension poles overlap so you can zip tie them together. Again a little duct tape may help. When attaching the horizontal and the vertical poles to each other, make an X with the zip ties. You may have to combine / feed two zip ties together to make a longer one. Make sure to feed the zip tie into the other one such that the teeth actually grab it.

2. If you need to more rapidly deploy the banners and you have a few extra hands, prevent horizontal sagging by affixing a line of paracord on the top corner at both ends of the banner. Then, a person stands off to the side...
so the line runs diagonal. With this method the vertical poles can be attached ahead of time, the poles and the banner roll up, are easily brought to the sight, unfurled and are hoisted quickly.

**KEY ROLES FOR MOBILIZING YOUR BANNER:**

**A SCOUT:** The person who is watching for hazards (tree branches, power lines, sidewalks, etc).

**IMAGERY COORDINATOR:** IS watching Mainstream Media Cameras to potentially move into their shot. IS looking for any issues like sagging or anything affecting the banner’s readability and making quick fixes/adjustments. IS liaising with internal media team to get great shots and maybe have someone standing by that can spread it, tweet it, tag your target in a post etc. IS directing the banner holders with clear communication of what is happening and when and their mobilizing of it is coordinated. Everyone should lift it at once, and be clued in to any movement. *The person acting in this role shouldn't be holding the banner themselves. This person needs to be mobile.*

**Some quick tips on Troubleshooting:**

- Sagging - (Remedy with lines or horizontal pole across the top)
- Marching? - Always use the top horizontal poles.
- Want to rapidly deploy at a stationary location?
  - Affix all poles ahead of time
  - Orient poles so the extension is facing the ground and the handle is facing up. This way you can extend after you’ve affixed the banner.
  - Attach carabiner clipped lines to the right and left top corners. The diagonal line will help stabilize and prevent sagging. It replaces the horizontal poles.

**Tips for holding the banner on an overpass and staying safe:**

On overpasses it's especially important to make sure to have enough folks holding the poles / diagonal lines. One per pole / line is fine though it’s preferable to also have a floater who can swap in if someone tires. **One of the most important pieces of advice is to hold the poles close to your body and brace the bottom of the pole with your foot so it can't slip out.** Place hands a little higher if it's windy. You’ll want to have an imagery coordinator that can communicate with pole holders how it looks for the cameras. A lot of times people get excited and caught in the moment and they forget to think about how it looks for those seeing the banner and they start to bounce up and down or let banner sag, etc.

Unless it is extremely windy you should be fine. Before going out, check [weather.gov](http://weather.gov) for the weather that day, looking at their graphical map to see what wind speed and gusts are predicted hour by hour. Winds below 15 mph is pretty safe and it's wise to exercise caution with winds at or above 20 mph. Additionally, let folks know that sometimes an extra breeze of air or displaced air from swiftly moving trucks might come along so it's advisable to be vigilant and mindful.

Do a little huddle with folks beforehand to make sure everyone is clear on the game plan (a short huddle at the end is great too!). Think about morale, emphasizing impact, and leaving everyone feeling successful so they come back for the next outing. Encourage them to let you know their limits (time, etc). Have people dress appropriately for the conditions - you're much more exposed on an overpass than amongst city streets. Maybe bring an extra thermal jacket, raincoat / windbreaker and gloves on cool days, hand warmers in the winter, and sunscreen and water in the summer months. Bringing a thermos filled with hot beverages is a great way to recruit friends and comrades. To the degree that folks are comfortable and it seems safe to do so based on
conditions, smiling and waving at cars and trucks and encouraging them to honk helps to keep people's spirits up.

Have a skilled photographer help out, if possible. If there are good spots to have them photograph from with an appropriate (likely long-distance) lens, scouting ahead of time can help reveal optimal locations. Connect via phone with the photographer while they get their photo to ask if there are any adjustments we need to make and ask to proof what they captured before calling it good. In order to capture a photo of the banner looking as good as your audience of drivers see it, you can work with a driver doing a lap or two under the banner with a photographer such that the sky is the backdrop. If all you have is your camera phone, you can likely get a few decent photos this way too.

**Use your imagery and banners to mic-check the media, make the imagery so iconic and message up-front that they almost can’t help but repeat your message for you. We call this earned media. Backbone Campaign’s philosophy around placement of imagery is that you make it really difficult for the media to ignore the main message.** Often the media will record at least some of the speakers. Knowing that, we place the crowd behind the speaker (a show of power), and the banner right behind/above the speaker so the cameras have no choice but to cover the thrust of your message.

We also like to make sure there is a similar setup whenever the cameras do an interview. We never count on the media to actually broaden the verbal message spokespersons have delivered. By having your iconic photo communicate the message we can counteract some of their omissions and selective audio editing. Having someone dedicated and skilled as the media liaison is important (and working with the imagery coordinator to watch where cameras are pointing). Your media liaison greets the media as soon as they are on site, ideally with a press-packet, and helps guide them to the shots you want and wrangling together people they might be interested in speaking with/interviewing. You can also offer to help make space in the crowd so they can get their shots.

*Now that you’re out there broadcasting and amplifying your message in this highly visible and bold way, send us some of your photos. Backbone is eager to turn other folks on to this tactic and celebrate your good work in the world!*  

*You can get more tutorials and order your Banning Toolkit from Backbone’s DIY Banning page ([http://www.backbonecampaign.org/banners](http://www.backbonecampaign.org/banners)).*  

**Go Forth and Banner Boldly**