



Since the early 90's, hundreds of thousands of tactile signs have been produced and installed across the country in response to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Advocates for the blind and low vision population have learned a great deal about what makes tactile signs legible. Current guidelines are changing dramatically, and your next construction or renovation project should include signs that reflect changes in the following major areas:

TYPESTYLES

Typesyles for Tactile Signs
New guidelines require tactile signs to use widely spaced block style characters with thin strokes. Research has shown these characters are the easiest for those with vision impairments to read by touch.

The most effective sign systems will take advantage of the new provision to separate the tactile from the visual messages.



Visual Message

Separate Tactile Message w/ Braille

When separate visual characters with duplicate information are provided, the tactile characters can be smaller and much less obtrusive to the sighted reader.

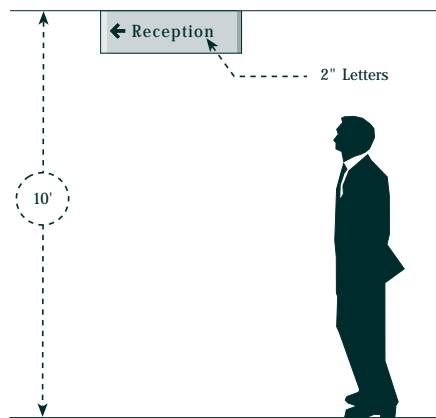
Typesyles for Visual Signs
Most all typefaces commonly used for architectural signs are approved for use on visual signs.

LETTER HEIGHTS

Letter Heights for Visual Signs
The 1991 ADA specified that characters for visual signs be sized according to the viewing distance from which they are to be read. The new guidelines include a chart with minimum character heights, based on viewing distance.

For the majority of wall mounted signs, minimum letter height for visual characters is 5/8".

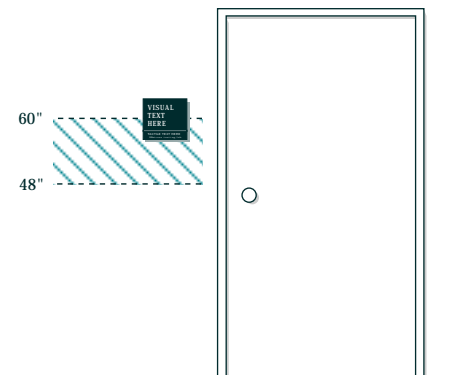
For ceiling or projecting wall signs, minimum character height has been reduced from 3" to 2", provided you can approach within 15 feet of the sign.



Letter Heights for Tactile Signs
The letter height for tactile signs is specified as no less than 5/8" and no greater than 2". When separate visual characters with duplicate information are provided, the tactile characters can be as small as 1/2".

MOUNTING POSITIONS

Mounting Position for Tactile Signs
Signs are to be mounted so the tactile portion is between 48 and 60 inches above the floor. This lowering of the signs is in concert with other changes to make reach accommodations for short people and those in wheelchairs.



Signs on doors with closers that remain closed will now be allowed to be door mounted.

The new ADAAG, published July 23, 2004 and the 1998 and 2003 editions of the ANSI standard include these changes. While the new ADAAG will not be enforceable until 2006 or 2007, some State governments have already incorporated language from ANSI 98 or 03 in their building codes.

See the Access Board's website for more information on state accessibility codes:
www.access-board.gov/links/statecodes.htm