



How to make signs and labels

Design and make signs and labels to mark where improvements have been made, encourage others to look after them, and identify what plants are on your site. This activity provides a range of ways learners of different ages can get creative and make their own signs and labels to communicate the positive changes they've been involved in.

Teaching time

30-45 minutes

Learning outcomes

- safely use appropriate tools/equipment for a task
- design and create signs to communicate the improvements they have made

Step by step

Explore outdoors with learners to create a list of areas that require signs – are any areas homes for wildlife, or need looking after? What plants or seeds have been planted and need labels?

Ask learners to choose a feature or plant they want to make a sign or label for.

Invite learners to design the lettering for their chosen sign or label on paper. For younger learners, support them to write simple letterforms or words.

For KS3 and above

If creating signs from wood, prepare the wood by cutting it into suitable lengths and sizes. Older learners will then need to prepare the wood by smoothing any rough edges with sandpaper. Any sawdust will need to be brushed off before the wood can be drawn on.

Learners can then use a pencil to copy their design onto the wood, to create a guide. Use chalk pens or permanent marker pens to complete the sign, adding colour to help it stand out or add decoration.

Signs can then be mounted on a stake, by nailing through the front of the sign into the stake behind.

To help learners, mark the wood on the front of the sign with pencil, by aligning the stake in the middle – this will act as a reference for placing the nails within this marked area. Small pieces of wood don't need to be mounted on a stake – if used length ways they can be pushed directly into the soil.

Using these guidelines and with support learners will use a hammer to gently tap 2-4 nails into the wood (the number of nails will be dependent on how big the sign is. For small signs of 10-20cm, two nails will be adequate. For larger signs use as many as needed to secure.) Still with support, place the sign on top of the stake and drive the nails through the sign and into the stake.

Place the finished sign in its desired location, using a hammer if needed to knock signs into the ground. Signs can also be attached to fences or other structures where appropriate.

Green Skills



Suitable for

Early Years
Key Stage 1
Key Stage 2
Key Stage 3
Key Stage 4

Location

Indoors
Outdoors

Season

Spring
Summer
Autumn
Winter

What you'll need

paper
a selection of pens, pencils or crayons for drawing designs
chalk pens or permanent markers for writing on signs
optional: acrylic paint and brushes

For EYFS-KS2

natural or recycled materials, such as large stones or pebbles for writing or painting on, lolly sticks, wooden spoons

For KS3+

off-cuts from planks, boarding or pallet wood
sandpaper
nails
hammer
wooden stakes or brush handles for mounting signs

Key vocabulary

Label
Sign
Names of plants and features



For KS2 and below

Support learners to copy their letters onto their sign or label. You may wish to have a selection of materials to choose from – pebbles or stones, lolly sticks or wooden spoons work well.

Once written (and decorated if they wish) – support learners to place their signs in the right place outdoors. Pebbles or stones can be simply laid down next to the corresponding plants, while lolly sticks or wooden spoons can be stuck into the ground.

Hints and tips

- add blackboard paint as a background to your sign to make chalk pens stand out
- signs can be varnished with an outdoor varnish to weatherproof them, giving them a longer life in the outdoor environment

Support and extension opportunities

Use stencils and sponges with acrylic paint to paint lettering on the signs for learners who need support with fine motor skills

To stretch and challenge older learners, you can get them to use hand tools, such as a junior hacksaw or a wood saw, to prepare the lengths of wood for the signs, with appropriate safety precautions in place



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