

## How to Make a One-Person Message Banner

The one-person banner is a light and compact version of the giant freeway banner that is designed to be used by an individual in a march or at a rally. Constructing a one-person banner follows the same process and requires the same tools as building a giant banner. The two major differences are materials and size.

### Materials needed include:

- Heavy duty orange polyethylene tarp material.
- Backbone Campaign [letter templates](#)
- Multi-purpose polypropylene netting
- Twist ties
- Zip ties
- PVC pipe and fittings

With the exception of the orange tarp, these materials should be readily available at a hardware store.

Tarpsplus.com is a good place to get high quality orange tarps that won't fall apart like the blue ones that you find everywhere. If you have a U-Haul dealer close by, they sometimes sell excellent quality orange tarps in three different sizes.

You can download the letter templates provided by Backbone Campaign or create your own. It's a good idea to print the letters on heavyweight paper or card stock. Most copy centers can do that for you. If you plan to only use your one-person banners for marches or rallies, consider printing on 8 ½ x 11 inch stock or you can use 11 x 17 inch stock for Freeway visibility.

The poly netting or bird netting, as it is sometimes called, will most likely be made up of 1" squares, as opposed to the deer netting which has much larger squares. Most hardware stores carry this in their fencing department.

11" white or black Zip ties are available in the electrical department; the twist ties (green) can be found in the garden department of most hardware stores.

The Schedule 40 PVC pipe with a preferred size of 1", and the fittings, which will include a one inch "T" shaped piece and five, one inch end caps can be found in the plumbing department of your local hardware store.

### **Size and assembly:**

Except for assembling the one-person banner framework, the procedure is the same as the large banner.

The size of your message will determine the size of the banner, but it generally should not exceed eleven, 8 ½" x 11" letters wide and no more than three rows of 8 ½" x 11" letters high for small banners. If using larger letters, it should not exceed seven, 11" x 17" letters wide and two rows of 11" x 17" letters high for freeway visibility.

The PVC structure consists of a vertical pipe and two horizontal pipes or support bars. The lower horizontal pipe is one solid piece, while the top support bar is made up of two identical pieces of pipe connected to either side of the "T". The top bar sections when attached to the "T" should equal the same length as the bottom support bar.

For photos showing how the PVC and netting connect for the 1-person banner, check out this Flickr album:

[https://www.flickr.com/photos/backbone\\_campaign/albums/72177720324669805/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/backbone_campaign/albums/72177720324669805/)

Connecting the netting will require that you zip tie the net to the top and bottom bars. Spacing is important, so begin by stretching the net firmly and then tightly zip tying it to both ends of one of the bars. Next, zip tie the net to the center of the bar. Finally, depending on how long the bar is, divide the space between the center tie and the ends and add one or two evenly spaced ties to each side of the center. Now repeat this process on the remaining horizontal bar.

Connecting the vertical to the horizontal is straight forward. The top bar has the "T" as a connecting point, but to keep from losing control of the bottom bar, especially in the wind, you will need to use a zip tie to make a loop around the bottom bar in line with the "T" on the top bar and large enough

to slide the vertical pipe through. The end caps are then placed on the open ends of each piece of PVC pipe to prevent the sharp edges from cutting someone, in the event that your banner comes in contact with a comrade.

The vertical pipe's height will be determined by how you carry your banner. If you plan to be stationary, you will probably want to place the end of the vertical pipe (with an end cap) on the ground, with the lower bar above your line of sight so you can see the action in front of you. If you are in a march, you will probably be more comfortable with a shorter vertical pipe. Flag pole harnesses work great for this application.

## Constructing the Banner

You will need a flat floor or grassy area or table to work on and a few simple tools:

- Sharp scissors
- Strong Hole-Punch
- A Sharpie for tracing letter templates onto tarp material

**Step 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. You can download the character letter patterns from the link at Backbone's DIY Bannering page

(<http://www.backbonecampaign.org/banners>) or print off some of your own.

**Step 2 – Tracing:** Trace the letters onto the tarp material with the Sharpie. We recommend strategically placing the stencils on your tarp material in a manner that conserves as much of this precious resource as possible.

**Step 3 - Letter Cutting:** Cut the letters out of the tarp material with sharp scissors.

**Step 4 - Hole Punching:** We generally punch the holes such that there is 1/4 of an inch or slightly more material between the edge of the material and the edge of the hole punch. The center of the hole punch is also about a 1/2

inch (1 centimeter) in from the edge of the material. 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 netting. A [hole punch template is HERE](#).

**Punch as few as you need to affix it securely.** If you put a few extra holes you don't HAVE to use all of them.

**Step 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. Or, if you are using the garden twist tie spool, they come with a built in cutter.

**Step 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 1/4 of an inch before twisting it.

### **Layout and Affixing the Letters to the Netting:**

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

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

Leave a space of about a letter 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 netting.

- Whenever possible, affix the letters to the corner points of the squares in the netting (this allows for the letter to be secured both horizontally and vertically with a single 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 will have a little give and not rip out of the hole.
- Three 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, you will want to make sure it's more secure with another twist or two. Simple tying will make it a lot easier to change messages for the next occasion the banner is deployed .
- **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. Finally, to visually check that 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.

*Congrats! You now have a highly visible banner to bring to a march or even deploy on a freeway overpass.*