

OUT OF THE TOOLBOX

10 Tips for Successful Wheat-Paste Posters

I first learned about this public visibility tactic in the 1980s during the Pledge of Resistance, when our national network would put up posters in almost a hundred cities overnight. *Bam!* Our message was everywhere. In the age of social media, street posters are under-utilized, which is a shame because they're great for mass publicity. There's nothing like being face-to-face with the message while you're walking down the street or driving on your way to work. Posters can be taped, stapled, or pushpinned, but for large jobs there's nothing more efficient than wheat paste. You can buy it online or find it at hardware or wallpaper stores. You can also cook it yourself using water, flour, sugar, and glue. Here are tips that I've honed over the years for getting your message out with wheat-paste posters:

1. If you're working with multiple posters, pre-organize them into sets, and place each set into stacks that can be accessed easily.
2. Simple, eye-catching designs with short, simple, agitational messages or questions work best. Bright color paper jumps out, but I like basic black-and-white.

3. In terms of size, 11×17 copies do the trick, but bigger is always better.
4. If you're pasting big posters, apply the glue with buckets, rollers, and brushes. If you're working with smaller posters, squirt bottles and sponges are easier to carry around.
5. A large, smooth surface is key. You'll need to scout locations in advance and know exactly where your teams are going.
6. Apply a layer of paste on the surface, put the poster on, and then apply another layer of paste on top of the poster. Make sure the edges are glued down; otherwise it's easy to pull the poster off.
7. Wear junky clothes and latex gloves.
8. Working in teams of three or four is ideal: one or two people to paste, one to put up the posters, and one to look out for cops. Our cop watchers yell, "Hey, Joe!" if a cop is seen.
9. My favorite time to paste is in the mid-evening, after it's dark but while people are still on the street. It can be easy to blend in.
10. Great locations to paste include light poles, electric boxes, newspaper boxes, and construction walls. Posters on bridges have a long viewing life since it's a hard-to-reach location.