



As you requested, our list of Plaque Buying Basics – Rock Solid Advice from the Innovative Signs Design Team, is on the following pages.

What it is: Plaque Buying Basics contains the individual details that sometimes get overlooked or forgotten during the plaque buying process, especially if you have never purchased these types of products before. Think of it as a checklist of sorts, containing sometimes-vital information that will help make your purchase go as smoothly as possible. Keep in mind, however, that you are not expected to design your own plaque. That's our job.

What it is not: As the name implies, Plaque Buying Basics is just basic information about the plaque buying process. It is not meant to cover every possible situation you may face, nor was it intend to be a list of instructions you are required to complete before ordering. In fact, you can skip it entirely, if you like.

Our Ultimate Goal: If we bring just one detail to your attention that you otherwise would have overlooked or forgotten, then this report will be a valuable tool for you. If not, then you had a pretty good grasp of your project details all along. Congratulations are in order either way, because now you are on your way to receiving a great plaque – which was our ultimate goal all along.

Your next step:

- Read through this list.
- Skip items that do not apply to your project.
- Make note of anything that does apply to your project.
- Take any necessary actions, as described.

Plaque Buying Basics

Rock Solid Advice from the Innovative Signs Design Team

Get an Early Start

It sounds simple, but this really does matter. When you start early, you will enjoy standard production time for your order and avoid adding considerable cost to your project because of rush production and overnight shipping.

Stress and errors also tend to be reduced significantly just by getting an early start.

How to do it: At the very least, even if you haven't finalized all of the details yet, call with a quick overview of your project. The earlier you call, the more options you will have to meet a deadline within normal production times. And when an unknown detail or two pop up, there will be plenty of time to address them.

Make Your Dedication Date Known

A good designer will work especially hard to meet your dedication or presentation deadline. However, that date needs to be known in the first discussion or submission of project details. Then every step that follows can be planned with your timetable in mind.

How to do it: During your very first phone call or communication, inform your designer of the dedication date. If necessary, he or she will provide a "must order by" date along with your layout and quote.

Provide Sharp, High-Resolution Graphics and Photographs

We want your plaque to be great. People should walk by, notice it, and be drawn in for a closer look. This is something we like to call "The Wow Factor." In other words, does it make people say "wow, that's a great plaque" the first time they see it?

Although a great design is essential to achieving this goal, the only way to follow through in the details of your inscription is with sharp, high-resolution graphics.

When it comes to photographs, this is achieved when the subject is in crisp focus and the whole image is high-resolution (which refers to the amount of pixels, or details, contained within each inch of the full-size image). Logos and graphics have similar requirements.

How to do it: Submit the best quality, highest resolutions possible, and be sure to discuss this detail with your designer. He or she will be able to accurately predict the image quality you can expect on your plaque.

Make Sure Your Plaque is Designed in Proportion to Your Mounting Space

A plaque that is mounted within a fixed mounting space looks best when properly sized and proportioned to match that space. It looks as if it was meant to be there all along.

How to do it: Measure the size of your space and include that information when requesting a layout and quote. Explain that you would like to maintain appropriate sizing and equivalent proportions between your plaque and the space available.

You may also supply a photograph and detailed measurements of your mounting location, then ask your designer to insert an image of your plaque design into the photo.

Some people find it extremely helpful to cut a piece of cardboard to the size and shape of their plaque and test it in the space prior to ordering.

Avoid Information Overload

Great inscriptions convey just the right amount of information, and that amount varies from plaque to plaque. The secret here is to provide full, rich content while avoiding an overloaded or cramped appearance. This makes your plaque attractive to observers, rather than overwhelming.

How to do it: Limit the length of your inscription to a reasonable amount for the plaque size you have chosen, and consult with your designer about whether it is too much or too little.

Make Sure Your Inscription is Designed in Proportion to Your Plaque

Just as your plaque should be balanced to your mounting space, your inscription should be balanced (sized and proportioned) to fit comfortably within your plaque. In other words, it should not be too small, too large, or out of proportion when compared to the plaque shape. It should fit perfectly.

How to do it: A skilled designer will be personally driven to maintain this balance for you, but you are the final judge. Once your layout is complete, view it from a distance and ask yourself: Does it appear in balance? Is there anything I would change to make it more pleasing to the eye?

If changes are necessary, make sure he or she understands your requirements in this area.

Eliminate Errors Through Diligent Proofing

An error-free order will make your day when it arrives. You will finally get to see and touch your new plaque, and you will immediately experience that sense of accomplishment for a job well done. Obviously, discovering an error that could have been corrected with some diligent proofing back in the design stage makes for a really bad day.

How to do it: Keep errors at bay by proofing your inscription from top to bottom, double-checking all words, dates and numbers (and by the way... dates and numbers are where most errors occur).

When finished, reverse the process and work your way through your entire inscription backwards, very slowly, word-by-word. The key is to see each word individually, which causes errors to become obvious – especially spelling errors.

If your plaque contains individual names of people who can be contacted easily, you may also consider supplying each one of them with a copy of the design and asking for a signed approval of their name. When a person is asked to check the spelling of their own name, you can be almost certain they will scrutinize it thoroughly.

Set the Stage for On-Time Delivery

This simply means following any instructions provided by your designer, such as placing a deadline-specific order by a certain date, or approving any final artwork. Turnaround time in production hinges entirely on these two details.

How to do it: If your designer provided a “must order by” date, set the stage for on-time delivery by placing your order on or before that day. If final approval is needed for any items, be sure to approve them or ask for changes when they are presented to you. This prevents your order from being on hold while waiting for these types of approvals.

Verify Your Order

Even though the vast majority of e-mail, faxes and US Mail get delivered as expected, there is an unfortunate reality that none of these systems work 100% of the time. Therefore, plan ahead by always following up on the orders you place. This will ensure that they are in production and scheduled for delivery when specified.

How to do it: Place your order, then follow it up with a quick “did you get my order?” phone call or e-mail. Specifically ask for verification that it arrived, and make sure you receive a response.

If you follow these Plaque Buying Basics, and be just as diligent in all of the other details surrounding your project, you will be thrilled when your new plaque arrives. It will be on time, error-free, and it will generate many compliments... All the ingredients of a great plaque.

A summary of Plaque Buying Basics:

- **Get an Early Start**
- **Make Your Dedication Date Known**
- **Provide Sharp, High-Resolution Graphics and Photographs**
- **Make Sure Your Plaque is Designed in Proportion to Your Mounting Space**
- **Avoid Information Overload**
- **Make Sure Your Inscription is Designed in Proportion to Your Plaque**
- **Eliminate Errors Through Diligent Proofing**
- **Set the Stage for On-Time Delivery**
- **Verify Your Order**

We hope you found this information useful, and we welcome your comments or questions at any time.

Now let's get started on your project. No matter how much or how little you have worked out at this time, call or contact us to get the ball rolling. You'll be glad you did.

Sincerely,
The Design Team

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