



BEST PRACTICE GUIDE



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Billboards are usually seen from a distance and for only a few seconds. Effective creative therefore needs to communicate quickly, remain legible at scale and make it immediately clear who the advertiser is.

This guide covers the key principles to consider when creating or reviewing billboard creative.



O1.

KEEP THE MESSAGE CLEAR

START WITH ONE PRIMARY MESSAGE

Before developing the creative, decide what you want someone to understand or remember after seeing the billboard.

Trying to communicate several messages, product features, contact details and calls to action at once makes a billboard harder to process. The strongest creative gives the audience one clear thing to take away.

A useful question to ask is: *If someone remembers only one thing from this billboard, what should it be?*

KEEP COPY CONCISE

As a general guide, aim for around seven words or fewer in the main headline or message.

This is not a strict rule, but outdoor advertising is consumed quickly, so every additional word increases the amount of information the audience needs to process.

Supporting copy should only be included when it is essential to understanding the message.



02. MAKE IT EASY TO READ AND RECOGNISE

CREATE A CLEAR VISUAL HIERARCHY

The audience should immediately understand where to look first.

Give the most important element the greatest visual prominence, then use size, positioning and spacing to guide the viewer through any secondary information.

In most cases, this means establishing a clear relationship between:

- The main message
- The key visual or product
- The brand or logo
- Any essential supporting information

If everything is given equal emphasis, the billboard becomes harder to understand.

MAKE THE BRAND UNMISTAKABLE

A viewer should be able to quickly identify who the billboard belongs to.

We recommend that the logo occupies at least 10% of the overall creative area, helping it remain clear and recognisable when viewed from a distance.

Brand recognition should not rely on the logo alone. Distinctive colours, typography, products, characters, shapes and other recognisable brand assets can all help make the creative immediately attributable to the advertiser.

DESIGN FOR DISTANCE

Creative that looks clear on a laptop may perform very differently on a billboard.

Use typography that is large, simple and highly legible, with enough contrast and spacing to remain readable from a distance. Avoid thin type weights, overly decorative fonts and unnecessary detail.

03.

USE THE SPACE EFFECTIVELY

USE STRONG CONTRAST

Billboards compete with buildings, traffic, signage and the wider environment around them.

Strong contrast between text and background helps important elements remain visible. Colours that appear distinct on screen can blend together when viewed from further away, so always consider how the creative will perform at distance.

KEEP IMAGERY SIMPLE

Imagery should help communicate the message rather than simply fill the available space.

Where possible, use a clear focal point rather than several competing images. Crop confidently, make products large enough to recognise and remove background details that do not contribute to the idea.

Billboards give advertisers an opportunity to use scale in a way few other formats can, so make the most important visual elements appropriately large.

CONSIDER THE LOCATION

The site itself can influence how the creative should work.

Consider factors such as viewing distance, traffic speed, approach direction and surrounding visual clutter. Where relevant, creative can also respond directly to its location, surrounding environment or audience.

With VAST's digital billboards, context can be taken even further. Creative can be changed by location, time of day or other relevant conditions, allowing the message to become more timely and relevant rather than displaying the same artwork all day.



04. TEST BEFORE IT GOES LIVE

KEEP CALLS TO ACTION SIMPLE

Long URLs, phone numbers and complicated instructions are difficult to process while someone is passing a billboard.

If a call to action is required, make it short and memorable. In many cases, the role of the billboard is simply to create enough awareness or interest for someone to find the brand later.

USE THE FIVE-SECOND TEST

View the creative for five seconds, then look away and ask:

- What was the main message?
- Which brand was advertising?
- What did you notice first?
- Was anything difficult to read?

Then view the artwork at a much smaller size or from several metres away. If important information disappears or the message becomes difficult to understand, simplify the creative.

BEFORE APPROVING YOUR BILLBOARD

Check that:

- ☐ There is one clear primary message.
- ☐ The creative has been designed specifically for OOH.
- ☐ The main copy can be understood quickly.
- ☐ The visual hierarchy is obvious.
- ☐ Typography is readable from a distance.
- ☐ Key elements have strong contrast.
- ☐ Imagery is simple and purposeful.
- ☐ The logo occupies at least 10% of the creative.
- ☐ The advertiser is immediately recognisable.
- ☐ Any call to action is simple.
- ☐ The creative works within the context of its location.

Following these principles will help ensure your billboard is easy to notice, easy to understand and easy to attribute to your brand.

AVOID

- ✗ Long URLs - they're difficult to read and remember on the move.
- ✗ QR codes - they're impractical and unsafe for passing traffic.
- ✗ Too much copy - people only have a few seconds to take it in.
- ✗ Too many messages - one clear idea is easier to understand and remember.
- ✗ Small logos - your brand needs to be recognisable from a distance.
- ✗ Small type - if it can't be read quickly, it won't be read.
- ✗ Too many images - competing visuals weaken the main message.
- ✗ Low contrast - key elements can disappear from a distance.



