

# How to Make & Use a Magic Wall

## Ingredients

- One 8-to 14-foot-long piece of rip-stop nylon from a fabric store. Heavier weight looks sharper and is a bit easier to work with; lighter weight folds into a smaller package, but can get baggy.
- One 10.25-ounce can of either Krylon Easy-Tack Repositionable Adhesive 7020 or 3M Artist's Spray Mount - Artist's Adhesive #6065.
- Markers for participants: Black chisel-tip markers.
- Markers for the facilitator: Use dark, cool colors for text (blue, black, green, brown, purple) and hot colors for accents and highlights (red, yellow, orange).
- Paper for participants: Half-sheets of white and color copy paper work best. The size encourages brevity and keeps your Wall from running out of space. Use paper color to distinguish the results of several questions and activities. Hint: to cut paper, use a triangular architect's or engineer's scale as a straightedge to rip sheets in half, five or six at a time.
- A wide roll of Anchor Brand masking tape, blue painter's tape, or push pins to hang the Wall. If you must leave no trace, then use white "artist masking tape." If push pins are acceptable, use them; they are quick and easy and don't let go if the Wall needs to stay up for several days.

## How to Make a Wall

- Lay the fabric on newspaper-covered floor with stupendous ventilation, but out of the wind (a garage with open doors works well). I'm not kidding about the ventilation; read the cautionary information on the can before using.
- With sheets of paper, mask about 6 by 6 inches in each corner and along the sides where you expect to hang the Wall with masking tape. It's helpful to have Spray Mount-free areas because it tends to dissolve the masking tape adhesive.
- Spray as directed on the can to cover the fabric evenly. Spray lengthwise, crosswise and diagonally until the can runs out.
- Get out of there and let it dry for three or four hours, or overnight. If you can let it hang for a day or two to air out so much the better.
- Fold it up, sticky side in to keep dirt and hair from attaching to the fabric. If possible, store the Wall in a place where it can continue to air out before using it for the first time.

## Set-up

- Don't be timid when pulling the Wall open. The fabric sticks to itself with great determination, but it's rip-stop, so you won't hurt it. A helping hand makes it easier to pull the Wall open and tape, or pin, it onto the Wall.
- Before the meeting begins, set out a black marker and about ten half-sheets of paper for the first Magic Wall activity on the agenda.

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- Note: If you are having a multiple-day meeting, it's possible that Walls mounted with tape will fall during the night. It's not usually a big deal to re-hang it in the morning.

## Show Time!

- In your Warm-ups, be sure to introduce the Magic Wall and how you will use it as a tool. That will save time later in the meeting; it will also satisfy the curiosity of the participants about that big sheet on the wall.
  - ***We'll use a Magic Wall today to record and organize your ideas. It will allow everyone to contribute and help us to do our work efficiently. The Wall is a piece of rip-stop nylon, sprayed with adhesive; the half-sheets of paper you see will stick to the Wall.***
  - ***Rather than have me paraphrase what you say on a flip chart, each of you will write your ideas with a black marker. Please put just one idea per sheet, written in a landscape format. I hope you can capture your thoughts in a sentence or a phrase rather than a paragraph. Please write as large as possible so we'll all be able to read it from our chairs.***
- When it's time to put the Wall to use, these are good reminders:
  - ***Remember that we want to have one idea per sheet, written in a landscape format, with the black marker, in big letters.***
  - ***State the question clearly, then say Now we'll have a few minutes of silence so you can think, then write. Write as many ideas as you like; let me know if you need more paper.***
- Enforce the quiet rule strictly. Whispering ruins the focused and shared sensation of thinking. I like to point out that thinking is a vastly underutilized tool in most meetings. People laugh about it, but's it true!
- When the writing slows down, transition from quiet time to having participants post their ideas on the Wall. You may find these directions helpful:
  - ***I'd like each of you to come up – one at a time – to post your ideas.***
  - ***Tell us what you've written and make sure everyone understands it.***
  - ***Space each sheet away from other sheets unless the content is similar or related somehow. That way we'll see patterns begin to emerge. And don't hold back duplicates; we want every sheet up on the Wall.***
  - ***The Wall is open for business!***
  - ***Hint: let participants self-select when to rise, even if there is a long pause before the first one. Like popcorn kernels popping, they'll soon rise in quick succession.***
- Distribute different colors of paper as needed. Collect the "old" unused sheets to reduce confusion.
- The rest is up to you and your imagination.

## Wrap-up

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- Take digital images before you strip down each set of sheets so you have a permanent record of what was said and how it was arranged.
- When you pull sheets off the Wall, keep them grouped by topic with a cover sheet showing the agenda item, or topic, they relate to; this makes transcription a breeze, especially when compared to balky flip charts.
- Some people prefer to transcribe the digital images rather than the original handwritten half-sheets.
- At the end of the meeting, remove all the paper from the Wall. Paper left on for more than a day will stick more vigorously.
- Always fold the Wall sticky side in.

## Care & Storage

- Your Wall may need a touch-up of additional adhesive after half a dozen uses.
- To refresh a tired wall, throw it in a commercial washing machine with hot water and detergent, then a no-heat dryer. Apply adhesive as before.

