D.I.Y. Banners: fast & cheap!

1: Plan the design

Short & clear words, maybe with logos, cartoons, images, a website address? Jokes REALLY help! Do some **sketches** & work out the bits that need to be the biggest. Lower-case with serifs is the easiest to read. Tall thin banners can be carried by 1 person (or a tree / lamppost) chinese style. Big banners might impress but may be a handful.
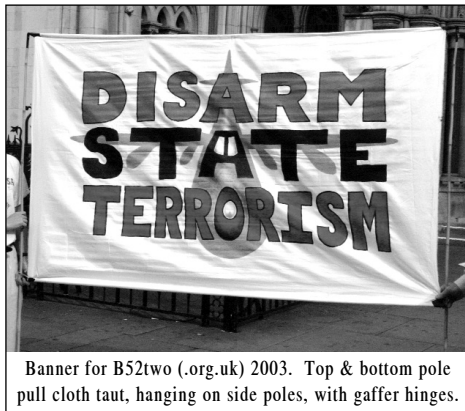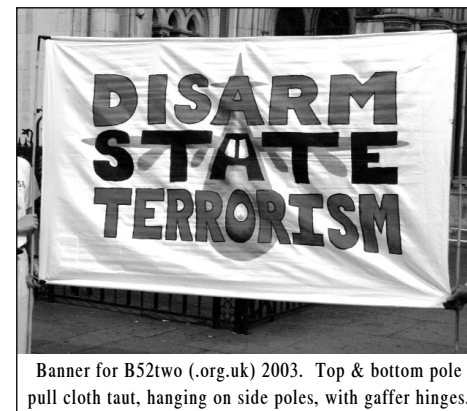
2: Sizing & Sketching

Lay the cloth down, cut & trim to required size. Use chalk (colour chalk on white cloth) to mark the very middle, then sketch out letters / images starting in the middle. Leave 1 foot (or 30cm) margins for a clearer look & for hems, later.

Step back (stand on a chair) and see what needs to be moved or changed to make it look better. A damp cloth can wipe chalk marks.

3: Paint it!

Fill in the outlines with paint, thinly. Sprinkle a few drops of water into the paint every 15mins or so, to keep it flowing. Avoid leaving lumps as they take longer to dry and might crack. Keep brushes specific to a colour - i.e. don't put a red brush in the black paint pot! **Step back** (stand on a chair) to see what needs to be re-painted. Some cloth will absorb the first coat a bit. Leave it 30 mins and a second coat of paint might help.

Things to sort beforehand:

Canvas sheet or newspapers (to protect floor from paint)
Cloth like sheets or duvet covers from a charity shop
Scissors to cut / trim the cloth

Chalk / pens / markers to sketch letters / logos etc.
Paints: acrylic is water-based & waterproof (not cheap!)
  avoid gloss-paint: nasty oil-based & takes days to dry
  Some water-based 'eco-paints' are great, but not cheap
Brushes: cheap arty or DIY brushes, 1/4inch to 2inch+

Access to a **sink** with **soap** to wash and rinse brushes
Some **space** and **a few hours** to let the banner **dry** flat

Bamboo poles (or willow / hazel branches) and a **saw**
Safety pins or access to a **sewing-machine** & skills
Gaffer tape for hinges & joining poles & strengthening

Banner for B52two (.org.uk) 2003. Top & bottom pole pull cloth taut, hanging on side poles, with gaffer hinges.

4: Clean brushes

...as soon as you finish using them or they may never work again. Use a small bit of soap or washing-up liquid and make sure to rinse them out very well - soap can really mess with paint.

5: Outline

Optional: let the banner dry & add thin outlines to key words to make them really stand out - this is also a good way to 'tidy' up any wobbly or wonky lines. Some cloth absorbs the first coat a bit. You might now see that a second coat of paint will help.

6: Let it dry

...ideally opened flat on a floor or hanging on a wall or clothes line, if possible overnight. >

Inspiration & other @rty resources:

Photos of almost everything: **www.flickr.com**
Art activism against BP & Shell: **artnotoil.org.uk**
The king of UK stencil art: **banksy.co.uk**
Intricate radical info-posters: **beehivecollective.org**
Carol Simpson's fantastic cartoons: **cartoonwork.com**
Eric's 'wood-cut anarchist' art & more: **drooker.com**
Great graffiti site, especially 'war murals': **graffiti.org**
Satirical, subversive & sophisticated: **rtmark.com**
Brilliant UK cartoonist: **staneales.freeserve.co.uk**
Writing on the side of roads: **freewayblogger.com**
Inspiring graf and more: **doodledubz.blogspot.com**
Worldwide street-art gallery: **woostercollective.com**
Polyp's radical cartoons, props, etc: **polyp.org.uk**
Stig's cartoons, props, subverts, banners, etc: **shtig.net**
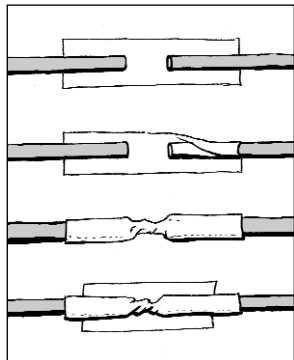
'Sag-proof' Banner hanging

The best way to quickly and cheaply carry and hang a cloth banner is to use **Gaffer tape** and **3 or 4 bamboo poles.** 2 are vertical **'side-poles'** and 2 are the **'cross-poles'** running across the top & bottom of the banner. The cross-poles keep the banner taut and readable. It can be carried on marches or leant against a wall / tree.

1: Sizing

Lay the dry banner face down on a clean floor or table. Place the top & bottom cross-pole on it. The top pole should be a few cms (**A**) wider than the banner. If a crosspole is too long, saw off a bit from the thinner end. If a cross pole is not long enough, join two poles together to make the desired length, lashing the overlap in at least three places with **squeezed** gaffer tape.
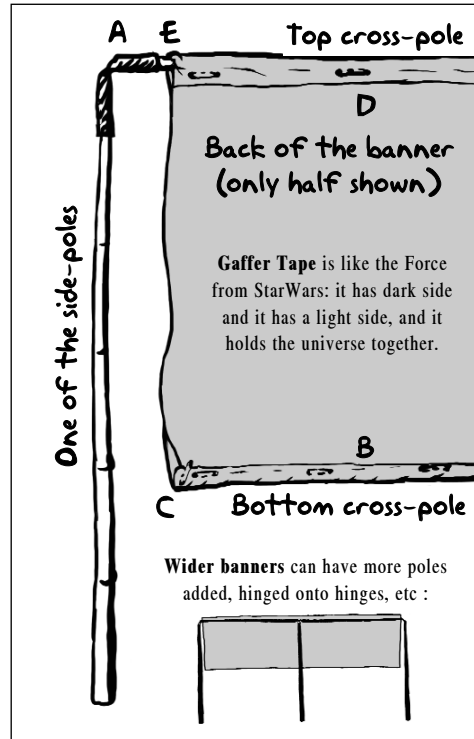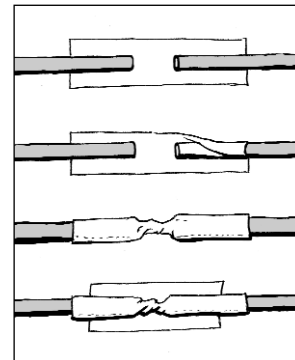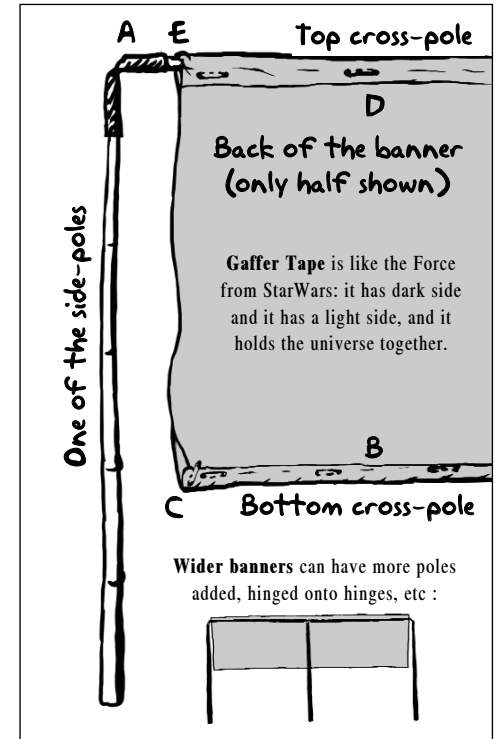
2: Hinge top crosspole to side-poles

Take each end of the top cross-pole and join them with a **gaffer-tape 'hinge'** keeping a 3 cm gap of flexible tape between them. As shown below, the easy way to do this is to cut two 15 cm strips and lay one down sticky-side up. Then lay the poles on it and gradually roll the tape over. Put the 2nd bit of tape down and repeat. **Squeeze the gaffer to make it a strong join.**

3: Hem the bottom cross-pole (B)

The bottom cross pole should be slightly shorter than the width of the banner. Saw it if needed. Fold the bottom edge over the width of three fingers. Stick safety pins every 2 or 3 feet to form a hem. Thread the bottom cross-pole into the hem. Use gaffer or more safety pins to tuck the pole inside each end, so it can't fall out (**C**).

Top cross-pole

Back of the banner (only half shown)

Gaffer Tape is like the Force from StarWars: it has dark side and it has a light side, and it holds the universe together.

One of the side-poles

Bottom cross-pole

Wider banners can have more poles added, hinged onto hinges, etc :

4: Hem the top cross-pole (D)

Fold the top edge over the width of three fingers. Stick safety pins every 1 or 2 feet to form a hem. Thread the top cross-pole into the hem. Use gaffer to pinch a bit of the cloth tightly around each end of the top pole (**E**) so that the cloth is pulled taut, left-to-right.

5: Done!

The two side poles are like legs and the whole thing should be able to stand against a wall, etc.

   For transport & storage: fold the side-poles like the arms of a pair of glasses so they are lying against the top-pole. Roll up the banner like a scroll around the poles. Write an email or phone number on it in case it's mislaid. **Sorted!**