



<http://www.spookyblue.com/halloween/vacancy/index.htm>

Electric "Vacancy" sign



For 2003, we're adding a crypt/mausoleum to our haunt. Being the friendly spirits that we are, we thought we'd welcome prospective specters looking for a home with a nice, lighted "Vacancy" sign above the door.

Materials:

Box

I had some 3/4" press-board left over from another project, and it worked very well. However, you can use practically anything because all we're really building is a box. Your dimensions will vary if your material is other than 3/4" thick, so keep that in mind.

Signage

The signage itself, is cut from a sheet of 3/8" Acrylic Safety Glazing (plexi-glass). Home Depot (Haunt Dead-po?) sells several sizes. An 18"x24" sheet was \$5.00. I used flat black latex paint to opaque the area around the text.

Lighting/Electrics

As any DIY haunter knows, you can use practically anything once you've applied a little imagination. I used a wad of white Christmas tree lights to back-light the sign. You can just cram 'em in there, or lasso them together with a few zip ties. Mind the heat, though. You don't want to place a lot of wattage into an enclosed space or you could start a fire.

Construction

Use your favorite graphics program to make the text in a nice, bold font. Then just print it. Size the font (or stretch it) to fit inside 18"x4 3/8". Make sure to leave about 5/8" or

so border around the edges. Since a sheet of paper is generally only 11" tall, you'll have to print half the text on one sheet, and the rest on another sheet.

If you're really good, you can free-hand your text directly onto the plexi-glass sheet. That would have been a waste of a lot of perfectly good plexi-glass for me, so I used PaintShop Pro.



Plexi-glass! It can be cut with a table saw, hand saw, or scored with a razor blade & snapped (allegedly).



18" is a perfect length, so cut a piece that was 4 3/8" tall. These measurements need to be pretty close to make everything fit together.



Center your text beneath the plexi-glass sheet and tape it to keep it from moving around. Use a Sharpie to trace your text onto the plexi-glass.

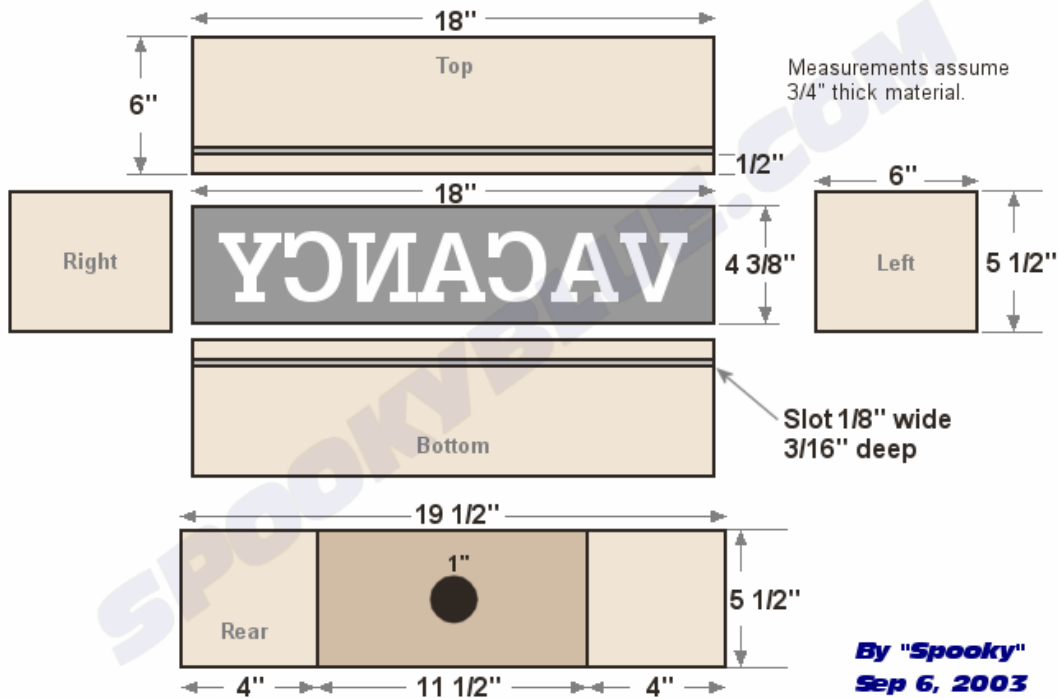
Opaque: After tracing your text onto the plexi-glass, remove the tape. Place a few sheets of white paper on your workbench and set the plexi-glass sheet on top. Now you're ready to opaque. If you want the outer surface of the sign to be nice and smooth, apply the opaque to the back of the sheet. This is what I would have done if I had thought about it in time. I used plain old flat black latex paint.

When applying the paint, keep reminding yourself, "I'm painting *around* the letters, not *inside* the letters." A flat, stiff brush works well. I found it worked better to dab instead of brush the paint on. It may take several coats to block out all the area around the text. The object here is only to allow light to show through the text. After the paint is dry, hold the sign up to a light to see what areas need more attention. At first you might think it'll never work, but just keep at it. If you accidentally get paint inside the text area, just use your finger to wipe it away. You can also use a hair dryer to speed up the drying process.

Use the dimensions and assembly instructions here.

I used 3/4" hard-board. If your building material is of a different thickness, you'll have to adjust a few of the measurements.

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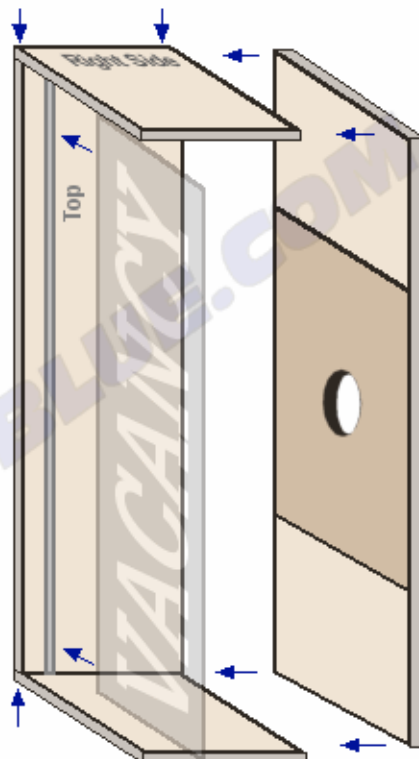
- 1- Assemble top & sides
- 2- Insert finished front
- 3- Assemble bottom
- 4- Assemble rear components

Note: Rear components shown as 1 unit for demonstration only.

Follow steps 1-3, then attach each rear pieces individually.

Bottom piece not shown.

By "Spooky"
Sep 6, 2003





The plexi-glass sheet is $4 \frac{3}{8}$ " tall. The distance between the top and bottom is 4". Cut a $\frac{3}{16}$ " slot into the top & bottom. The plexi-glass sheet fits snugly into the slots, and there's no light leakage.



Use wood screws or finishing nails to fasten the sides. When fastening the back, make sure to use screws on the center piece (with the hole cut in it) so that you can easily remove it. You can even install a hinge. I made my center back piece from $\frac{1}{8}$ " hard board, and the other two back pieces of $\frac{3}{4}$ " hard board. This gives the electric cord plenty of clearance. (Sure did have a lot of this hard board stuff lying around)



Diffuser: After assembling the box, place a couple of sheets of thin white paper in the box and tape to the sides. This will soften the light. You can also use theatric gels to make the text glow a particular color. Once again, be mindful of using anything that could easily catch fire. It's pretty warm inside there with the light on.



Light: I made a rope out of a wad of white xmas tree lights and a few zip ties, then let the cord hang out the rear. You'll probably need to rasp out the cord hole or cut it a little wider than 1" so the plug will fit. It might also be a good idea to drill some holes in the back to vent the heat.



Screw in some hooks, paint the box (if you like) and your sign is ready to hang. Happy haunting!

Obtained from
Omarshaurtedtrail.com