

## Chalkboard or Dry Marker Board

*Adapted with permission from White and Hennessey*

Perhaps the most widely used medium of instruction is the chalkboard or dry marker board. The guiding principle of board work is to look at your writing as though you were a student in your own class. Almost anything you write will be clear to you. The task, however, is to make your presentation clear to your students.

### **Students must be able to see and to read what you have written**

Illegible or obscured work is valueless. Watch out if you have small handwriting, tend to scrawl, or write too lightly. Before class write something on the board and then go to the back of the room to see if it is legible. Sit in one of the last rows and take a critical look at your board work. Some instructors like to mark off the “bottom line of visibility” with a chalk line. Try to keep your work visible for as long as possible. If you are right-handed, fill the right-hand panel first, then move to the panel on the left and continue your writing. In this way you will not be blocking the view of students copying the writing you have just completed.

- Your board work must be organized so that students will be able to interpret their notes later:
- First erase the board completely. This step is especially important in mathematics, where stray lines may be interpreted as symbols.
- If you are to solve a problem or prove a theorem, write a complete statement of the problem or theorem on the board, or write a precise reference.
- Fill one panel in at a time, always starting at the top and moving down.
- Make your notation consistent with that in the textbook or lecture, so that students do not have to translate from one system into another.
- Underline or in some other way mark the most important parts of your presentation: the major assumptions, conclusions, or intermediate steps that you plan to refer to later on. Colored chalk may help to clarify drawings.

### **Talk about what you are writing**

Talking about what you are writing gives your students the material in both visual and auditory modes. Be sure to speak loudly enough; if you are facing the board to write on it, you must raise your voice somewhat to be heard.

### **Other tips for effective board use**

- Erase only when you have run out of space.
- If you find that you have made a mistake, stop. Don't go back over the last three panels madly erasing minus signs: first explain the error, then go back and make corrections, if possible, with a different color of chalk or marker.
- If you are presenting material that you want students to duplicate in their notes, you need to give them time to copy what you have written. They will want to copy everything you put on the board into their notes, even if you tell them not to. Don't ask them to analyze while they are writing. When you want them to discuss a point, stop writing. Let people catch up to you (they may be lagging behind by two or three lines). Then begin your discussion. Similarly, if you have engaged in a long discussion without writing very much on the board, allow them time to summarize the discussion in their notes before you begin to use the board or to speak.
- Students will copy everything you put on the board (and sometimes nothing else) into their notes. The board should serve to highlight and clarify your discussion or lecture.

### **Find out if you are using the board effectively**

- At some point, ask your students if they can read or make sense of what you have written. Don't do this every five minutes—an occasional check, however, is in order.
- View a videotape of your presentation, putting yourself in the place of a student taking notes.