

Wheatpasting 101



By LGBT YouthLine

LGBT YOUTHLINE'S WHEATPASTING KIT

This kit aims to provide an easy way for 2SLGBTQ+ communities to engage in grassroots advocacy – through wheatpasting in your local community!

Wheatpasting is a fun, cheap, easy, and quick direct action technique for spreading a message and raising awareness about an issue with your neighbours and others in your town or city. The best part is that you likely already have most of the supplies that you will need to wheatpaste! The kit contains posters to get you started and instructions on how to wheatpaste.

HOW TO MAKE THE PASTE

Wheatpaste is a glue that can be made by mixing one part white or whole wheat flour with four parts water. Follow these steps:

1. Boil your water.
2. Once your water has boiled, add the flour a little bit at a time, whisking constantly to incorporate the flour into the water and prevent lumps.
3. Turn the heat to medium-low and continue to cook the paste for 15-20 minutes, whisking or stirring the paste constantly to remove any

Disclaimer: LGBT YouthLine is not responsible for any posters affixed to public or private property and is not responsible for the actions of individuals.



- When planning to go wheatpasting, choose the time and place carefully. In general, it is best to wheatpaste in the evening or at night, when there is low visibility and not a lot of people around. However, this may also make passerbys feel more confident harassing you. This is why it may be best to go in a large group.
- If you encounter anyone who disagrees with the message on your posters and starts to harass you, it is best to walk away and stop wheatpasting until you are far away from the person.
- If you encounter police or bylaw officers, do whatever feels safest for you. You can cite your local bylaws or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which includes postering on public property as a protected form of free speech under section 2(b). However, police and bylaw officers may not be on your side. You should prepare for the possibility of interacting with police and bylaw officers anytime you go out wheatpasting.

lumps and prevent burning. Try to aim for a thick glue consistency but don't worry too much – you can always add more water or flour to adjust the consistency.

4. Remove the paste from the heat and wait for it to cool. It is normal for the paste to thicken as it cools. Once cooled, the paste is ready to use.

The above recipe should work well but you can experiment with adding other ingredients to your wheatpaste if you'd like. For example, some people say that adding a bit of sugar or cornstarch makes the paste stickier.

If you are making your wheatpaste in advance, you can store it in a sealed container in the refrigerator. The paste will last for a few days.

HOW TO DESIGN EFFECTIVE POSTERS FOR WHEATPASTING

While this kit contains 65 posters, you might want to continue wheatpasting after you have used them. You can either photocopy the posters in this kit or design your own.

General tips for designing posters for wheatpasting:

- **Choose a clear message that you want to communicate:** Because passersby will only see your poster for a few moments, make sure that your poster has a headline that summarizes your idea or message. The headline should be short, easy to understand, and to-the-point. Any images or graphic elements that you include should be simple and large. You can include additional text on the poster if you'd to include more detail (a list of statistics or demands, for example) or a QR code where they can get more information.
- **Ensure that the text and images are legible:** Use a legible, sans-serif font and keep text, images, and graphic elements large and high-contrast to make sure that people walking, driving, or biking past can easily read and understand your message.
- **Think about how to make your design work well in black/white or colour and at different sizes (8.5" x 11", legal size paper, etc.):** It is cheaper to print in black and white but designs in colour can be more eye-catching. For this reason, it is useful to design a poster that works well both ways.

community bulletin boards using staples.

- **Never wheatpaste on private property!**
It is generally illegal to paste posters on private property without permission, even if it seems abandoned (for example, a vacant business for rent). If you get caught wheatpasting in an illegal area, you may be fined.

Safety is important to consider when wheatpasting, especially if your posters have political messaging. Law enforcement, city officials, or those who disagree with your poster's message may give you a hard time.

Here are some tips to make wheatpasting safer:

- Always wheatpaste with a trusted friend or group of friends and stay together. It is easier to put up posters quickly with each person having an assigned role (for example, someone to apply the paste and someone to apply the poster). Being in a group is also safer if you encounter someone who is angry about your messaging.
- Consider your and your friends' positionalities. You are more likely to be targeted for engaging in wheatpasting if you are visibly queer, racialized, or otherwise marginalized.

SAFETY AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

While wheatpasting is a common grassroots form of advocacy, it does carry risks. The legality of wheatpasting depends on the area, so be sure to check your municipality or city's bylaws. You can often find these bylaws online by looking at your municipality or city's website.

For example, the City of Toronto's bylaws related to graffiti and posterage include the following on posterage: "Community posters regarding community issues [...] can be placed on utility poles." Greater Sudbury's Sign Bylaw states, "No Person shall Erect, authorize or permit the Erection or the continued Erection of a Poster Sign, except on a Utility Pole which is not located in the median of a Road Allowance." In both of these areas, posterage is allowed on utility poles.

General guidelines:

- In general, it is legal to wheatpaste on public property, such as utility poles. However, the legality of wheatpasting on public property may not be respected by law enforcement or city officials. If you are unsure if wheatpasting is legal in your area, you can also place posters on

Wheatpasting also works for (almost) any size poster, with larger posters typically being easier to see and read. Consider how to create a design that is easily scalable to different poster sizes.

- **Print on copy paper or thinner paper:**
Copy paper or thinner paper is best for wheatpasting as it will be easier for the paste to soak into the paper. Thin paper is also more difficult to tear down than thicker paper, as thin paper tends to come off small pieces while thicker paper tends to come off in large pieces or all at once.

HOW TO WHEATPASTE

Supplies that you'll need:

- Paste
- A paint brush or foam/sponge roller
- A bucket to hold the paste, wide enough for your brush or roller
- Gloves
- Posters
- Optional: window squeegee

Basic step-by-step:

1. Choose a surface to apply your poster, making sure that it's smooth and visible to passersby
2. Spread a thin layer of the paste that is slightly larger than your poster using a paintbrush, roller, or your hands
3. Apply the poster over the paste, smoothing out any bubbles or creases, as these will make your poster easier to tear down (a window-washing squeegee is useful for this)
4. Apply additional paste overtop of the poster, making sure to seal the edges and corners

Surfaces to wheatpaste:

Above all, you want a clean, smooth surface to ensure that the poster will stick evenly. Smooth metal, glass, wood, and concrete work best but even stucco and brick can work in a pinch. Avoid surfaces that aren't smooth, such as wooden telephone poles with embedded staples. Metal utility poles are best and are the most likely to be legal according to your area's bylaws (see Safety and Legal Considerations below).

Ideally, you'll want the posters to be at eye level to ensure that they'll catch the eyes of passersby. At the same time, posters at eye level or lower will be easier for people to rip down. Placing posters above eye level can help them remain out of reach to people

who may want to remove them. Consider the amount of foot traffic the area gets – while more foot traffic means more eyes on your posters, it also likely means that they will get removed faster. Also consider what communities you would like to see your posters – for example, posters with messaging related to protecting trans youth may be best placed around schools or parks.

Wheatpasting tips:

- Apply only a thin layer of paste, as larger amounts of paste will take longer to dry, making your posters more vulnerable to being removed.
- Wheatpasting can be messy – wear clothes that you don't care about getting dirty and bring a plastic shopping bag to hold all the items covered in wheatpaste after you're done.
- Pay attention to the weather. Don't go wheatpasting in the rain as your posters won't be able to dry quickly, making them more vulnerable to being removed. If it's too cold out, the wheatpaste may freeze immediately once it's applied to the surface and your posters won't stick.
- Check to see if your local library has free printing and photocopying.