

The Sixth International Marine Debris Conference (6IMDC)

Wooden Reusable Name Tag Creation 101

This guide was designed to provide the materials list and steps for name tag creation for the 6IMDC. The 6IMDC Zero Waste Working Group created this document to walk through our suggested steps to create reusable wooden name tags.

Materials:

- 3 x 4 inch (or preferred size) wooden planks
- Sand paper
- Chalkboard paint
 - There are a number of brands and types of paint you can purchase.
 - Tip: the more coats of chalkboard paint the better. We suggest using at least three coats of paint.
- Paint brushes or foam brushes*
 - Make sure to reuse the brushes in future painting projects!
- Newspaper and/or cardboard
- Chalk
- Water-based chalkboard markers (note that oil-based markers are permanent)
- Magnets or clips
- Spray bottle, water, rags/towels, isopropyl alcohol

Step for Name Tag Creation:

1. **Order materials (listed above).** We suggest doing a trial run before purchasing all materials. We started with a 'proof of concept' to make sure the name tags turned out as desired. We did a test run with only a few name tags before ordering all the supplies in bulk. We tested a number of chalkboard paints and chalk markers before deciding on the combination we liked best.
2. **Sand wooden rectangles.** Though the wooden planks were pre-cut, some of them were still a bit rough around the edges. One of our team members graciously volunteered to sand the edges of the wooden rectangles. He clamped about 100-200 of the wooden planks and was able to 'mass sand' the edges with a power sander. Note that even after this 'mass sanding' we still had to take a sheet of sandpaper and do a 'fine tuning' sanding to make sure the wooden rectangles passed the 'splinter test.'
 - a. Tip: Though this step takes time, sanding the name tags smooth made the painting step easier.
 - b. After sanding, make sure to wipe off all the dust before painting.
3. **Paint the wooden planks.**
 - a. Also review these tips below:
 - b. Cut up old paper towel tubes to set the painted wooden rectangles on - this will keep the name tags from sticking to the newspaper/cardboard paper they are drying on.
 - c. Paint at least 2-3 coats on each side. The name tag should be smooth (you shouldn't be able to feel wood grain. If you still can, paint another coat)!
 - d. Be aware of paint drips! Try to catch them before they dry. Chalkboard paint is not very forgiving, so if you have a drip, it will show clearly.
 - e. DO NOT stack the name tags until they are completely dry (for the chalkboard paint we used, this was three days). We made the mistake of stacking some of them before the three days were up and they stuck together... we had to re-sand and repaint. Learn from our mistake!
4. **Condition name tags.** Once the name tags are cured (dried for the required time), they need to be conditioned. This consists of rubbing a piece of chalk sideways on the name tag (rub both horizontal and vertical). Then wipe the chalk off with a rag/towel. Conditioning the name tags helps with the erasing phase (so the names aren't visible once you erase the chalk marker).
 - a. Tip: use a damp towel to wipe off the chalk or the name tag will appear a bit gray (with the chalk rubbed into the name tag).
 - b. Between each use of the name tags, they should be conditioned.

5. **Write names on name tags.** We created templates to use so the spacing on all the name tags would be similar and so suggest using a writing template to ensure consistency. After writing the names on the name tags, let them sit/dry a few minutes before touching them or stacking them. If you touch them too soon, they will smudge.
6. **Add the magnet or clip to the back.** The magnets we ordered had an adhesive on the back so we only had to stick the magnet to the name tag (no hot glue required). ****Important note:** Please make it clear to attendees that there is a magnet on the back. If there are any attendees with heart issues (e.g., pacemakers), they should use the clips.

Lessons learned:

- If the names are left on the name tags too long, they will be hard to erase. Isopropyl alcohol may be used to help erase the names (though a bit of paint may also rub off). If the names are still visible, another coat of paint may be required (generally only one coat required).
- Allow adequate time for each step of the process. To do these right, it will be a time-consuming process. Take the amount of time you think each step will take and double it. This will give you 'buffer time' to finish the name tags before your event.
- Make this a group bonding activity! The more the merrier-- and the quicker the process will go.
- Good luck and have fun!