



TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING DIVISION

FACT SHEETS

Traffic Signs

What do the different shapes of traffic signs mean?

What do the different colors of traffic signs mean?

Why can't different shapes and colors be used?



What do the different shapes of traffic signs mean?

In accordance with state law the city is required to follow the Federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) for the installation and application of traffic control devices including traffic signs. The MUTCD specifies what shapes can be used for certain kinds of signs. The following is a general list of what each shape means:

Shape	Meaning	Shape	Meaning
Octagon	Stop	Triangle	Yield
Circle	Advance Train Crossing	Pennant	No Passing
Cross buck	Train Crossing	Diamond	Warning
Pentagon	School or County Road	Rectangle	Regulatory, Guide or Warning
Trapezoid	Recreation/Cultural or National Forest Road	Shield	Highway Route

What do the different colors of traffic signs mean?

Per the MUTCD, the different colors mean the following:

Background Color	Meaning	Background Color	Meaning
Red	Restrictive or Prohibited	White	Regulatory
Orange	Construction	Yellow	Warning
Brown	Recreational or Cultural	Fluorescent Yellow-Green	School, pedestrian, or cyclist
Green	Guide or Informational	Blue	Motorist services

Why can't different shapes and colors be used?

The MUTCD specifies uniform shapes and colors for good reason. The use of consistent shapes and colors allows motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists to instantly understand the meaning of many signs without being able to read the sign legend. For example, only STOP signs are octagonal in shape with a red background, only a school sign is yellow/ fluorescent yellow green with a pentagon shape (like a schoolhouse), and only a warning sign is diamond shaped with either a yellow or orange background.

The purpose of the MUTCD is to establish uniform national criteria for the use of traffic control devices that meet the needs and expectancy of road users on all streets, highways, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and site roadways open to public travel. This promotes safety, inclusion, and mobility for all users.



Want More Information?

This flyer is for general purposes only. For more information, please contact the city of Las Vegas Department of Public Works, Transportation Engineering Division at (702) 229-6331 or <https://seeclickfix.com/las-vegas>

NOTE: The **Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)** is used throughout the country as the standard by which traffic control decisions are made. Nevada Revised Statute 484A.430 requires its use for placement of all traffic control devices. Find the **complete** MUTCD at <https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/> or scan the QR code.



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