

# **What to Look For (and What to Avoid) When Choosing Patient Room Whiteboards**





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## What to Look For (and What to Avoid) When Choosing Patient Room Whiteboards

Whiteboards are more than just a writing surface on a wall. They are communication tools that foster relationships between patients and providers. Whiteboards hold the potential to increase patient engagement, boost HCAHPS scores, and create a better environment for both patients and providers. However, to be effective, they must meet certain levels of quality, cleanliness, and functionality.

Whiteboards have been around since the 1950s—there’s no shortage of options when it comes to manufacturers—and choosing the right type of board can have long-lasting implications in treatment settings. Healthcare is a specialized field and providers need specialized tools like custom whiteboards to effectively communicate with patients. The most effective whiteboards used in healthcare settings are expertly designed and tailored towards the needs of patients. These types of whiteboards help providers clearly communicate with patients, and make facilities better places to stay, all while increasing brand recognition.

What makes a quality whiteboard that is effective for patient communication and care? There are several key components:

- The quality of the whiteboard surface
- The materials used in the manufacturing process
- The customization options available during the design process
- How easy the whiteboards are to use, clean, and maintain
- The ability to change the whiteboard content and design as needed



“Despite being the most important part of a whiteboard, not all whiteboards feature a high-quality writing surface.”

## THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURE: THE WHITEBOARD SURFACE

The surface of a whiteboard is its defining feature. It directly determines the overall performance of the board—how easy it is to write on and clean off—and how long the board will continue to do its job. Standard dry erase coatings are made from a dual-component water-based polyurethane that, when dried, leaves a hard erasable surface on whatever it covers. Dry-erase markers contain an ink made from an oily silicone polymer, which prevents the ink from sticking to this type of surface, resulting in writing that is easily wiped away.

Despite being the most important part of a whiteboard, not all whiteboards feature a high-quality writing surface. Some whiteboard surfaces make it difficult to clean and maintain the board after use. While the oil-based silicone polymer in dry erase markers generally allows the ink to be wiped away, some whiteboard surfaces can latch onto the colored pigments in the ink. Little by little over time, the residue from leftover ink creates a gloss difference on the surface of the whiteboard. This makes it difficult to write on the whiteboard and leaves faded marks behind. This effect is known as whiteboard ghosting. It's best for healthcare facilities to avoid these types of whiteboard surfaces.

### What Makes a High-Quality Whiteboard Surface?

There are two ideal whiteboard surfaces:

1. Anti-ghosting whiteboard coatings
2. Glass









Anti-ghosting whiteboard surfaces are specifically designed to prevent the ink of dry erase markers from penetrating the surface of the coating, eliminating the problem of ghosting. These surfaces make the whiteboard easy to write on and even easier to wipe down, clean, and disinfect.



Premium glass whiteboard surfaces are non-porous, which naturally prevents ink from latching onto the surface and leaving behind faded marks even after years of use.

## Whiteboard Surfaces



LOOK FOR	AVOID
 Feature patented coatings or quality glass surfaces (e.g., frosted glass)	 Standard whiteboard polymer coatings (e.g., water-based polyurethane, melamine, etc.)
 Never ghosts or leaves faded marks	 Will eventually allow ink to build up, staining the board and causing ghosting
 Wipes clean easily with a single wipe	 Requires cleaners to remove ghosting
 Easy to write on and use	 Ghosting can lead to smudging and poor writing

## A Clean Whiteboard Can Lead to Higher Patient Satisfaction

Cleanliness in patient rooms is a major issue in healthcare. Studies have discovered that many of nation's hospitals scored poorly when patients were asked questions about cleanliness.<sup>1</sup> The same was found to be true for Canadian hospitals.<sup>2</sup> Whether or not rooms are objectively clean is beside the point. What matters is the patient's experience and perception; does the patient feel that the room in which they are staying is clean?



## See the Difference a Good Whiteboard Surface Can Make

### AVOID



### LOOK FOR



This perception of cleanliness translates directly to whether the patient has an overall positive hospital experience and even how they view their care, says Press Ganey.<sup>3</sup> Their data shows correlations between patients' perceptions of room cleanliness in three important categories:

1. The risk of hospital-acquired infections
2. A hospital's score on the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey
3. Scores on the HCAHPS teamwork indicators

When used effectively, patients will interact consistently with the whiteboard in their room. Providers will leave important care information on it, and patients and their family can write down questions and information for healthcare teams to review. A clean whiteboard surface (one free of dirt and old, faded writing) can make all the difference in a patient's perception of cleanliness in their room.

Hospitals seeking to distinguish themselves from their competitors can do so by starting with their patient care boards, ensuring they are of the highest quality and are always kept clean.





## Whiteboard Materials

### LOOK FOR

- ✓ High quality steel or hardboard materials
- ✓ ¼" tempered low-iron glass
- ✓ Bacteria resistant materials that are non-porous
- ✓ Magnetic and non-magnetic options

### AVOID

- ✗ Low quality MDF or melamine materials
- ✗ Non-tempered glass
- ✗ Materials that are porous or prone to bacteria growth
- ✗ Only non-magnetic options

## THE RIGHT CORE MATERIALS DETERMINE WHITEBOARD DURABILITY AND PERFORMANCE

Whiteboards have two major components: the backing and the dry erase coating. During the manufacturing process, the backing—generally made of either glass, porcelain, hardboard, steel, medium density fiberboard (MDF), or melamine (melamine-formaldehyde resin)—is cut to the specified size and shape before a dry erase coating is applied to it. This choice in backing material is important because it determines the overall durability and performance of the board as well as what type of coating can be applied to it.

Melamine, for example, is a nitrogen-based compound commonly used in whiteboards because of its price point; it's a very inexpensive material to work with. While it helps keep the cost of whiteboards low, it leaves a lot to be desired from a performance standpoint. Melamine not magnetic, has low durability, and requires multiple cleanings to erase writing and other marks.

High-quality whiteboards use one of three types of backing materials—steel, hardboard, or glass. Non-glass whiteboards are usually backed with hardboard (for non-magnetic surfaces) or a 22-gauge steel sheet that is laminated to ¼" thick hardboard (for magnetic surfaces). This makes them more durable than whiteboards made using MDF or melamine. A 6-mil thick patented coating is then applied to these surfaces, which creates the quality whiteboard surface that never ghosts or stains.

Glass white boards are also a great material for healthcare facilities because of their durability and natural resistance to bacteria. As a naturally non-porous material, glass has an anti-microbial surface, which means there are no microscopic crevices for dirt and bacteria to hide. This makes them easy to clean and disinfect. It also naturally prevents ghosting after you erase the writing on the board. Glassboards are constructed with a ¼" tempered low-iron glass that is available in magnetic and non-magnetic options. Keep in mind that special magnets (made of rare-earth metals) are required to use on whiteboards made of glass.



## Quality Materials Make Beautiful Whiteboards

**AVOID**



**LOOK FOR**



## CUSTOMIZATION OPTIONS ALLOW FOR VERSATILE USE

Standard whiteboards may come in a few different sizes, but they don't have the same features and capabilities as custom products. Creating the most effective whiteboard solution begins with choosing the right whiteboard for your healthcare facility, but the real effectiveness of the whiteboards (as communication aids) comes from the customization options available.

### Full Graphics and Printing Options

Standard whiteboards come printed with pre-set fonts, colors, and layouts that afford you no customization options at all. Whiteboards from some suppliers, while slightly customizable, are entirely DIY when it comes to customization. Look for whiteboards with custom printing options—logos to patterns, images, colors, and information fields—that allow you to create a communication solution tailored to your brand, facility aesthetic, and the types of patients you treat.

These types of whiteboards allow you to choose the font, colors, and sizes, and layout as you see fit. This enables you to build a board specifically for your company's brand, healthcare facility, patients, atmosphere, etc.

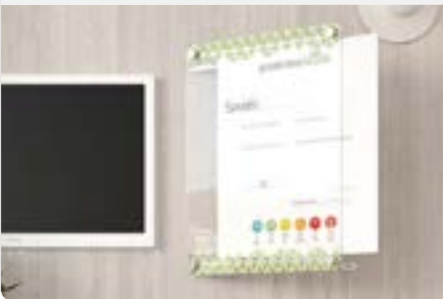


## Customization Options for Multi-Use Whiteboards

### AVOID



### LOOK FOR



Avoid whiteboards built using a lamination process that involves overlays. Overlays only place words, images, and colors on top of the whiteboard. This causes the printing to chip away and fade over time, especially after repeated cleanings. This is because the printed graphics are essentially sitting on top of the whiteboard, rather than being printed directly on them. Look for whiteboards made using a high-quality printing process that produces detailed fonts, graphics, and colors. This keeps them looking great and legible after years of use and repeated cleaning.

## More Options Make Whiteboards More Effective

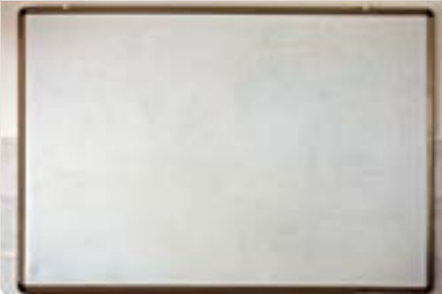
LOOK FOR	AVOID
✓ Custom whiteboard sizes, shapes, and orientations	✗ Limited sizing options. No custom shapes
✓ Customizable logos, images, colors, graphics, and fonts	✗ Pre-printed layout and templates
✓ High quality printing process that lasts	✗ Laminated overlays that don't last
✓ Choose any size font and type	✗ Few font and sizing options available
✓ Aesthetic pattern options	✗ Limited options
✓ Design and layout advice	✗ No design advice
✓ Multiple frames and frameless options	✗ Limited framing options
✓ Changeable insert cards	✗ No changeable whiteboard options
✓ Hidden marker trays and accessory holders	✗ No place to store markers or accessories





## See How Whiteboards Hold Up After Years of Use

**AVOID**



**LOOK FOR**













## EASY-TO-CLEAN WHITEBOARDS THAT LAST A LIFETIME

The best whiteboards are designed and built specifically with healthcare settings in mind, taking into consideration the concerns of hospital staff and how they use the whiteboards. This means that whiteboards built for healthcare settings need to be designed to resist bacteria, dust, and debris. This makes them easy to maintain and keep clean, an essential feature for busy healthcare facilities and staff.

Whiteboards made with cleanability in mind are made from materials that are long-lasting, easy to clean, and can withstand most common cleaners used in healthcare facilities. They will also have low-profile designs and mounting hardware that leave few spaces to clean. When there are fewer places for dirt to gather and bacteria to cultivate, maintenance crews can spend less time cleaning the whiteboards. It will also help decrease the risk of hospital acquired infections from occurring.

### Whiteboard Maintenance and Lifespan

LOOK FOR	AVOID
 Designs that limit spaces where dirt and bacteria can thrive	 Areas where dirt and bacteria can thrive
 Designs that can be wiped clean and disinfected quickly	 Designs that take time to scrub down and clean thoroughly
 The ability to use hospital grade cleaners without degrading materials or reducing longevity	 Cannot be cleaned with common hospital grade cleaners, or special cleaners required
 Can be cleaned repeatedly for years	 Materials and surfaces that break down after repeated cleanings
 Life expectancies measured in decades	 Lower life expectancies (approximately 10 years)













## OTHER WHITEBOARD FACTORS TO CONSIDER



How and where a whiteboard is made matters in more ways than one. The whiteboards you purchase for your facility are an investment. You'll want to get the most out of them while knowing you have certain protections. The best whiteboards come with warranties for the materials used and workmanship. Great manufacturers stand behind their products.

Sustainability is also of rising importance to healthcare facilities. Everything from the materials used to the manufacturing process has some effect on the environment, so it's become important to reduce those impacts in every way possible. Sustainable manufacturing practices using environmentally friendly materials is the way of the future when it comes to building whiteboards for healthcare facilities.

### Warranties & Sustainability Matter

LOOK FOR	AVOID
 Warranties on materials and workmanship (guaranteed against ghosting, fading, and defects in materials and workmanship for the life of the board)	 No warranties or those that expire after a few years
 Use sustainably sourced and recycled materials	 Less sustainable for the environment
 Sustainable manufacturing processes	 Non-sustainable manufacturing processes
 VOC free and CARB compliant	 Those with volatile organic compounds
 Manufactured in the USA	 Made overseas



## WHY USE CUSTOM WHITEBOARDS? SCIENCE REVEALS THEIR BENEFITS



Healthcare providers and patients across the country have experienced the benefits of implementing whiteboards into their treatment plans. As customizable whiteboards have become an integral part of the treatment process, they continue to foster communication, give patients a better understanding of their care, and create a more relaxing and engaging environment for patients. Through research, whiteboards have been shown to:



Increase patient satisfaction



Reduce hospital readmissions



Decrease patient anxiety



Improve communication between patients & providers



Increase the quality of patient care



Help healthcare workers stay organized & focused on patient care



Streamline patient treatment & facility processes



“Whiteboards helped up to 75% of patients communicate with nurses.”

Studies have evaluated the impact healthcare whiteboards have on patient satisfaction and communication, concluding that patient satisfaction scores (on a 0-100 scale) showed marked improvement. Improvements in HCAHPS scores were noted in three specific areas<sup>4</sup>:

1. Nurse communication increased by 6.4 points
2. Satisfaction with physician communication increased by 4.0 points
3. Satisfaction with involvement of patients in decisions regarding their own care increased by 6.3 points

Studies also cite enhancements in patient engagement and understanding of their care, revealing that whiteboards helped up to 75% of patients communicate with nurses.<sup>5</sup>

### Communication Brings Comfort

When patients feel they are more engaged in their care, on top of having open and effective lines of communication with their providers, they also experience less anxiety throughout the duration of their stay within healthcare facilities. Patient anxiety, which comes with its own host of health consequences<sup>6</sup>, can be mitigated and reduced through frequent and inclusive communication with patients. This not only greatly increases the comfort of patients, it also helps reduce the rate of readmissions, which is commonly caused by post-treatment anxiety.<sup>7</sup>



“Whether you’re a general hospital, mental health facility, urgent care, or any other healthcare facility, we are here to help you build an effective communication tool that works.”

These increases to patient satisfaction, engagement, and communication are only improved by the customizable qualities of patient care whiteboards. While standard whiteboards can help foster communication and care, customizable information fields help facilities further tailor their whiteboards to be helpful communication aids based on the patients they treat, effectively enhancing the already proven positive effects of whiteboards in healthcare settings.

## **EXPERTS IN HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATION AND WE PUT THAT EXPERTISE TO WORK FOR YOU**

At Ghent Healthcare, we offer high quality products and expert design guidance. We not only manufacture high quality custom whiteboards for healthcare facilities, we help you design a communication solution that is tailored to the types of patients you treat. Whether you’re a general hospital, mental health facility, urgent care, or any other healthcare facility, we are here to help you build an effective communication tool that works.

We specialize in healthcare communication and work almost exclusively with healthcare providers and facilities. We have the experience necessary to make your whiteboards as effective as possible. The result is a high-quality, long-lasting patient communication whiteboard that is custom tailored to your needs.





## We Have Six Different Whiteboard Options for You to Explore



### **CLASSIC CUSTOM WHITEBOARDS**

Get the classic look of a standard whiteboard with all the modern benefits. These whiteboards are durable, customizable, and made with the highest quality materials.



### **GLASSBOARDS WITH STAND-OFFS**

A unique, long-lasting alternative to traditional whiteboards. These non-porous glass writing surfaces are a modern take on the traditional whiteboard concept.



### **CHANGEABLE GLASSBOARDS**

Add extra versatility to your glassboard solution. Featuring interchangeable custom inserts that slide behind the glass writing surface, these glassboards can have multiple uses.



### **GLASSBOARDS**

An Innovation Award winner in 2021! These glassboards feature interchangeable inserts and a hinge system that allows the board to swing outward from the wall.



### **LOW PROFILE GLASSBOARDS**

A sleek and clean look. These glassboards feature a frameless, smooth writing surface with minimal mounting hardware that is hidden, giving the board a floating appearance on the wall.



### **COMBINATION BOARDS**

For versatility in communication. Combine our Classic Ghent Healthcare with tackable natural cork or self-healing vinyl surfaces. Perfect for facilities with varied communication needs.



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