

SIGN OF THE TIMES

Make a bold statement in your home with marquee letters, says **Sarah Withell**.

Typography prints and decorative letters are still trending and aren't showing any signs of going away soon. The latest take on this craze is marquee letters. Basically, these are large 3D letters that contain string lights, giving you a cool neon-sign effect in your own home. Marquee letters can be bought ready-made in all sorts of materials, shapes and symbols but can be expensive. I decided to give them a go myself and show you how easy it can be to make your own, personalised light-up letters. Even better than one letter or symbol alone, I tackled a whole word. The hardest part is choosing one.



For this project you will need:

- ▷ Papier mache letters from a craft store (I bought mine from Spotlight)
- ▷ Resene Quick Dry Primer Undercoat
- ▷ Resene paint in "Blast Grey #1" from the Metallics range
- ▷ String LED fairy lights – preferably battery powered
- ▷ Test pot and small detail-sized paintbrushes
- ▷ Masking tape
- ▷ Craft knife
- ▷ Small nail/screwdriver/drill bit for making holes





Step 1:

Count the number of bulbs on your string lights and calculate how many to allocate to each letter of your chosen word. Make sure to leave a few bulbs out in between letters so you can position the sign more easily once completed.

Handy hint:

Store-bought marquee letters often need to be plugged in to a power supply, making placement in the home a bit more limited. Battery-powered string lights eliminate this problem, meaning you can move your sign around easily.



Step 5:

Once your letters are completely dry, you can start feeding your string lights into the holes. This can be a bit tricky, and as you twist the bulbs in you might end up with a bit of the papier mache bunching up around the outside. Don't worry about this, you can clean it up later.

Step 6:

Once you have all your lights in place, tuck the loose cord into the cavity behind each letter and use masking tape to secure it in place. If your lights are a bit loose, you can use a bit of masking tape on the back to hold them still. This is a bit fiddly, but important for a nice finish.



Step 2:

Use a craft knife to cut off the back panel of each letter, removing the cardboard that is inside the hollow space. It's important to flip your letters first or you may end up cutting off the front face instead of the back.



Step 3:

Mark the placement of your lights on the front face of each letter. Running them down the centre lines of each letter at even spaces gives the best effect. Pierce small holes for your bulbs to sit in. It's important not to make the holes too large or the bulbs will not sit firmly in place. I used a nail to make the hole, and then a small screwdriver to twist it out to the right size.



Step 4:

Paint your letters with a coat of primer and then two coats of colour. I used Blast Grey #1 metallic paint and loved the brushed-steel effect it gave my letters.



Step 7:

Finish up by using a craft knife to trim away any fluffy pieces of papier mache that are loose around the light bulbs, and then touch up the remaining areas with more metallic paint. Once dry, find a spot for your new sign and turn on the lights.