



## Census of Marine Life: Writing Style Guidelines

### Resources

- Preferred dictionary: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., 2003 (available through Amazon or most bookstores worldwide that carry books in English)
- Online dictionary: Merriam-Webster Online Search <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> (free version with advertisements) or <http://www.merriam-webster.com/store/products/software/i-k/index.htm> for a downloadable version for PC or Mac, available for 15-day free trial or \$19.95 US
- General style guide: *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed., 2003. <http://www.amazon.com/Chicago-Manual-Style-Essential-Publishers/dp/0226103897>
- Online style guide: *The Chicago Manual of Style* <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/contents.html> available for 30-day free trial or ~\$30 US online subscription
- Suggested glossary: Marine Life Information Network, <http://www.marlin.ac.uk/glossary.php>

### Abbreviations and acronyms

In general, avoid using abbreviations, especially if they would occur only rarely in the text. Introduce abbreviations in parentheses after spelling out the first occurrence; for example, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Avoid Latin abbreviations in text except et al. in reference citations.  
and so forth – not etc.  
for example – not e.g.  
that is – not i.e.

Census of Marine Life: Spell out first reference, then use “the Census.” Avoid using the acronym CoML.

Census of Marine Life Project Areas, Project Names and Project Acronyms:

Abyssal Plains	Census of Diversity of Abyssal Marine Life (CeDAMar)
Antarctic Ocean	Census of Antarctic Marine Life (CAML)
Arctic Ocean	Arctic Ocean Diversity (ArcOD)
Continental Margins	Continental Margin Ecosystems on a Worldwide Scale (COMARGE)
Continental Shelves	Pacific Ocean Shelf Tracking Project (POST)
Coral Reefs	Census of Coral Reef Ecosystems (CReefs)
Information System	Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS)
Microbes	International Census of Marine Microbes (ICoMM)
Mid-ocean Ridges	Patterns and Processes of the Ecosystems of the Northern Mid-Atlantic (MARECO)
Near Shore	Natural Geography in Shore Areas (NaGISA)
Oceans Future	Future of Marine Animal Populations (FMAP)
Oceans Past	History of Marine Animal Populations (HMAP)
Regional Ecosystems	Gulf of Maine Area (GoMA)
Seamounts	Global Census of Marine Life on Seamounts (CenSeam)
Top Predators	Tagging of Pacific Predators (TOPP)
Vents and Seeps	Biogeography of Deep-Water Chemosynthetic Ecosystems (ChEss)
Zooplankton	Census of Marine Zooplankton (CMarZ)

### Commas

Use a comma before “and” in a series of three or more items.

### Compound words, hyphens, prefixes

Consult *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* for accepted spelling of compound words. Acceptance is determined by convention and sometimes appears idiosyncratic. Rely on *Webster's* for spelling of permanent compounds, such as seafloor (noun) and saltwater (adjective), and for hyphenated compounds, such as life-form

and mid-ocean. If a compound noun does not appear in the dictionary, it is generally best to spell it as two words. Following is a list of compounds as they appear in *Webster's* and a few exceptions to *Webster's* that may arise in Census publications.

### **Compound words:**

#### **Webster's**

deep-sea (adj.) – relating to the deeper parts of the sea <deep-sea diving, in the deep sea>  
deepwater (adj.) <deepwater port>  
life-form  
mid-ocean  
oceangoing (adj.) <oceangoing vessel>  
saltwater (adj.) – relating to salt water <saltwater species>  
seabed  
seafloor  
seamount  
seawater  
shrimplike

#### **Census exceptions to Webster's**

barcode, barcoding  
midsea  
midwater  
seagrass

**Hyphens:** Use hyphens to join two or more consecutive words that make up a single modifier of a word that follows. In general, a hyphen is not used when these consecutive words appear after the word they modify. Do not hyphenate compounds with adverbs ending in *ly*. Section 7.90 in *The Chicago Manual of Style* (7.87 in online version) is an excellent guide to hyphenation for compounds and prefixes.

tube-building worms	worms engaged in tube building
well-known effect	the effect is well known
deep-dwelling species	species that dwell in the deep ocean
10,000-square-kilometer tract	an area of 10,000 square kilometers
commercially fished species	the species is commercially fished

**Prefixes:** In general, do not use a hyphen with simple prefixes. See extensive but nonexclusive lists of preferred spellings in *Webster's* at anti-, co-, counter-, hyper-, inter-, mis-, multi-, non-, out-, over-, post-, pre-, re-, sub-, ultra-, and un-.

multicellular, multiyear  
noncommercial, nonmigratory  
overexploitation, overfish  
recolonization, reexploration  
unicellular, but single-celled and one-celled

### **Dates**

Plurals require no apostrophe; for example, 1970s and 1980s.

Use B.C. and A.D. (with periods) rather than B.C.E. or B.P. and C.E.

### **Italics**

Use italics for names of ships and submersibles (but not abbreviations designating type of vessel), titles of books and journals, and genus, species, and subspecies names (but not designations following such names). Use roman type (not italics) for names of research programs, titles of chapters and journal articles, and taxonomic divisions higher than genus.

*Alvin*, RV *Polarstern*, USCGC *Healy*  
*Hyperoodon* spp.  
International Polar Year (IPY)  
seed shrimps (class Ostracoda)

## Numbers

Spell out fractions and numbers one through nine, then use numerals. In a sentence containing numbers both larger and smaller than 10, use numerals for all things of one kind. Use commas in numbers of four or more digits (except addresses, dates, and page numbers). Spell out million and billion. Use numerals with percent and units of measure. Treat days, weeks, months, and years as parts of a calendar rather than units of time.

two humpback and nine blue whales

2 humpback, 9 blue, and 21 minke whales

We sighted 2 humpback, 9 blue, and 21 minke whales in four hours.

5,000 tons, 51,000 tons

four-week cruise, one month, 30 days

two-thirds full

1 million

2 percent

4 liters (about 1 gallon)

Percent - Spell out the word "percent" in text but not usually in tables or within parentheses (for example, 10%).

Currency: Use the dollar (or currency) sign with numerals; for example, \$3,500, \$5 million.

## Spelling and capitalization

the Census, Census projects

Figure 2, Table 5

hot spots – not hotspots

octopuses – not octopi

sulfide – not sulphide

under way (adv.) <work is under way>

mollusk – not mollusc\*

harbor – not harbour\*

color – not colour\*

\*Depending on the outlet for your publication, there are times when the British rather than American English spellings of certain words are more appropriate, so please follow your publication's guidelines when deciding on whether to use British or American spelling for words such as mollusk, harbor, and color.

## Units

Use SI units generally, followed if necessary by equivalents in parentheses. For example:

2 to 3 centimeters (about 1 inch)

1,500 meters (5,000 feet)

## Wired words

e-mail

the Internet

listserv

online

Web site, Web page, Web-based, the Web

## Word processing

Insert page numbers.

Use indents and tabs, not the space bar, to align text, especially in tables.

Do not insert extra returns between paragraphs.

Do not use automatic hyphenation.

*Prepared by Dale Langford, Census of Marine Life Editor*