

Universal Writing Guidelines for Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences Courses

Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences 300/400-level courses with writing assignments should follow these guidelines. Grading on written assignments should be affected by compliance with these guidelines. The goal is to aid students by promoting effective written communication skills.

1. The introduction must include the following:
 - a. a lead sentence that addresses the specific topic of the paper;
 - b. general important findings of others concerning the topic;
 - c. justification (or need) for the information presented; and
 - d. a specific purpose or purposes statement located at the end of the introduction.
2. Citations are required for all information presented that is not common knowledge (other than author results). Not doing so is plagiarism.
3. Copying recorded material (written or archived media) verbatim is plagiarism, unless quotation marks are used and a citation is provided. Long quotes should be avoided and even short quotes should be used sparingly.
4. All information cited in the text should be represented by an entry in the literature cited section and vice versa.
5. A consistent literature cited format should be used – the format is at the discretion of the instructor.
6. Tables and figures should be in the correct format.
7. Table and figure captions should contain sufficient information so that the captions could stand alone without referring to the text of the paper.
8. All figures and tables should be referred to and discussed in the text and should be numbered in the text in the same order in which they are first mentioned. Tables and figures can be included in the text as soon as possible after their initial discussion in the paper or all can be at the end – this is at instructor discretion.
9. Information (results) that the author or someone else has reported should be written in the past tense.
10. Acronyms and abbreviations should only be used after being initially defined. Both should be used sparingly – if an acronym is going to be used only once or twice, write out the term, do not use an acronym.
11. Sentences should never start with an Arabic number, an acronym, or an abbreviation.
12. Pages should always be numbered, generally at the bottom center of the page.
13. The first time an organism is mentioned in the text its scientific name must appear. The first letter of the genus is capitalized; the species is in lower case. The scientific name is either italicized or underlined.
14. All numbers should be to the same decimal point in a common data array. Significant digits imply precision.

15. Possessives and contractions should be avoided.
16. Paragraphs must follow the concepts of correct paragraph structure – they should not be just random breaks in the narrative. One sentence paragraphs should be avoided. Correct paragraph structure usually means beginning with a topic sentence and all information in the paragraph is about that topic.
17. Unless otherwise specified, all text (including literature cited) should be double-spaced.
18. The mode of presentation of statistical results is at the discretion of the instructor.