Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

Style Guide

SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme

Photo | Carlo Iacovino

Acknowledgement

Many thanks to our colleagues at Secretariat of the Pacific Community for generously providing us with their own style manual, from which the conventions in this guide have been developed.

Contents

About this guide

This guide is designed to outline conventions for editorial style and grammar at the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

This guide is not intended to be a rule book, nor is it designed to turn you into a SPREP robot.

Rather, it's a tool for helping you to learn about the editorial style and the written communication conventions that we follow.

Our staff come from a wide variety of backgrounds and speak many different languages. Resources such as this one help to promote consistency in all our communications.

This saves time in getting things approved, and reinforces the message that we are working together as one team.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the Communications and Outreach team.

1 *SPREP style basics*

We are the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). It's quite a mouthful so it is perfectly acceptable to use the acronym, provided you have written it out in full in the first instance.

SPREP is the regional coordinating organisation for the protection and sustainable development of the Pacific island environment.

Our vision is: A resilient Pacific environment sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.

On all SPREP produced materials we include the SPREP logo, our address and contact details (including the web address) and our vision.

To ensure that we are efficient and can address queries regarding resources we have one generic email contact address – sprep@sprep. org. This is the email address that is included on all SPREP materials.

When we refer to SPREP Members we use an uppercase 'M'.

SPREP has 26 Member countries and territories. Some of these are referred to as our Pacific island Members, and others are referred to as our metropolitan Members.

When we talk about our Pacific island Members we are careful to refer to them as countries and territories. We do not capitalise 'island' 'countries' or 'territories', and we strongly discourage the use of the acronym PICTs.

When we are listing more than two countries or territories they should appear in alphabetical order.

2 Spelling

Many words in English take different forms that can be characterised as either American or British English. Generally, SPREP uses British spelling. This means that we use -ise and -our word endings, not -ize or -or. For example, we say organise (not organize) and honour (not honor).

We include the letter 'e' in words ending with -ment. For example, we say judgement (not judgment) and acknowledgement (not acknowledgment).

We also use the British form of words with the letters 'ae' or 'oe'. For example, we say aetiology (not etiology) and foetus (not fetus).

We always write 'programme' except where the official name uses Program.

We write gram, kilogram, litre, metre (not kilogramme, liter).

3 *Capitalisation*

Proper nouns that are names of specific institutions, organisations, programmes, meetings, workshops, seminars, consultations, projects, treaties, international agreements, conventions, arrangements, understandings, protocols, directorates, divisions, ministries, departments, etc.

As a general rule, capitalise all nouns and adjectives in these names, but use lower case when the reference is not specific.

the Canberra Agreement .... the agreement was signed

the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme .... the programme encompasses

the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish................................ the committee discussed

the Ministry of Primary Industries.. he was attached to the ministry

Themes

Themes (of a meeting, workshop or conference for example) begin with a capital, and may be italicised.

The meeting, which has the theme *Managing strategic risks*, began on Monday.

Titles

Capitalise personal titles before a name.

President Kennedy, Ratu Seru Epenesa, Dr Arthur Whistler

Capitalise specific position titles.

Director General of SPREP,
Chair of the meeting,
Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Communications Advisor in the Health Protection Programme.

If the position is not specific, use lower case.

The head teachers met on Friday.
The ministers left the building late.
She aspired to become a doctor.

Nationalities and languages

All words derived from country names should be capitalised.

I-Kiribati, ni-Vanuatu, English style guide, French-speaking people.

Note also the use of i-Taukei for the indigenous people of Fiji language and their language.

Geographical and topographical place names

Place names and topographical features should always be capitalised.

Pacific Ocean, Coral Sea, Viti Levu, Majuro Atoll, Apia, Mauna Loa, Sokehs Rock, Marianas Trench, Emperor Seamounts

Likewise, all island groups are capitalised.

Bismark Archipelago, Hawaiian Islands, Tuamotu Archipelago.

Pacific, when referring either to the region or the ocean, is always capitalised. Note that the Pacific islands is not an official name, therefore we do not capitalise the word islands.

Pacific island countries and territories, the Pacific region, the Pacific Ocean

Seasons, weekdays, months and events

Do not use capitals for spring, summer, autumn, winter; use capitals for days of the week, months, holidays, and events.

Friday, July, Independence Day, International of the Child.

Earth, world and other celestial bodies

Capitalise earth and world only in connection with astronomy or astronautics (the Earth, the Galaxy, the Moon), but use lowercase where the proper noun is used as an adjective (earth satellites, moon rock); do not use capitals for the resources of the earth, the population of the world.

Proprietary names

Proprietary names (or trade names) are normally capitalised, unless they have become generic terms, such as aspirin, linoleum, and nylon. Capitalise registered trade names such as Xerox, Land Rover, Coca-Cola.

Ocean currents

Ocean currents are capitalised.

Equatorial Counter Current, Humboldt Current

Winds

Winds are not capitalised (for example, southeast trades, monsoon winds), but weather and climatic systems are.

El Niño, La Niña, Intertropical Convergence Zone, North Pacific High

Compass points

Compass points (north, south, east, west) and their derivations (northern, southern, eastern, western, southwest, northeast, etc.) are lower cased unless they form part of a place name.

South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Pacific Northwest

Publication titles and subtitles

Capitalise the first word of a heading or title, and the first word after a colon in a subtitle.

The effects of nickel mining on the environment: Nickel mining in New Caledonia.

4 Punctuation

Full stop

Use only one space after the full stop at the end of a sentence.

Colon

A colon is most often used to indicate that an expansion, qualification or explanation follows (for example a list of items in running text). Do not leave a space between a colon and the preceding word (unlike French usage).

> The discussion group covered three topics: carbohydrates, lipids and proteins.

Semicolon

A semicolon is used:

- to link two connected thoughts in the same sentence:

> John says he intends to go on duty travel in August; however, he hasn't made definite plans.

- to separate items in a series in running text, especially phrases containing commas:

> John Green, Fisheries Statistician, The WorldFish Center; Jane Brown, Fisheries Development Adviser, SPC; Pierre Blanc, Fisheries Information Officer, SPC.

- to add emphasis or contrast:

> In men the most important aetiological factor is a high-fat diet; in women, an oestrogen deficiency.

Comma

Commas indicate a pause, which can help comprehension and give the reader time to absorb the meaning. A comma has many functions, but some of the more important ones are to separate words in a series or list, and to separate words, clauses or phrases that would otherwise be unclear. Sometimes the presence of a comma can completely change the sense of a sentence.

> The student claimed her teacher was wrong.
>
> The student, claimed her teacher, was wrong.
>
> The children were able to jump off the truck before it turned over and ran away.
>
> The children were able to jump off the truck before it turned over, and ran away.

Many connecting words need commas around them: on the other hand, however, in addition.

> In Cook Islands, however, the reverse is true.

Strings of adjectives

More than one adjective modifying one noun should be separated by commas:

> long, sharp spines
>
> small, brown, flightless bird

Items in a series

These are separated by commas. A comma may be needed for clarification before a final 'and'.

> bananas, and fish and coconut products (i.e. fish and coconut products
>
> bananas, fish, and coconut products (i.e. only coconut products)
>
> bananas, fish and shellfish, and coconuts

A good way of deciding where a comma can aid understanding is to read your text aloud.

Brackets

A complete sentence in brackets should have the final stop inside the closing bracket.

> There were many forest birds in the study area. (This was no doubt due to its isolation.)

Question mark

Courtesy questions: No question mark is needed after a request or instruction put as a question for courtesy.

> Would you please sign and return the attached form.

Do not use a question mark in indirect speech.

> The Director General asked when the annual report would be completed.

Exclamation mark

Avoid using it.

Quotation marks

Use double quotation marks (") to denote speech and single marks (') to denote concepts or irony.

> A 'many partners, one team' approach is recommended.
>
> Jane ate the muffin, which was supposedly 'gluten free'.

In speech quotations we use double quotations in the first instance and single marks for quotations within quotations.

> "Hal said, 'Good morning, Dave,'" recalled Frank.

Short quotations of up to four lines are normally run into the surrounding text. They are set off by opening and closing quotation marks.

> It has been said that, 'a classic is something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read'.

Extended quotations should be introduced with a colon and separated from the surrounding text by paragraph spacing before and after.

> Kirch said:
>
> "Ethnographers have provided a scholarly legacy, replete with detailed descriptions of indigenous hooks, traps, nets and the like … but sadly lacking in information which could answer such important questions as: How were these items used? In what specific micro-environments were they effective? At what phase of the tide, moon, or other significant environmental parameter were they used? What were the kinds of fish caught?"

Possessive apostrophe

Add 's to singular nouns, including those that end in 's': the essay's strengths, a hostess's pay

Add only ' to plural nouns: the planes' vapour trails, the boys' desks

For plurals that do not end in 's', you need to add 's: men's attitudes, children's toys

NB These do not take an apostrophe: Pilots of 747s undergo special training, the 1980s, 1990s etc, NGOs

5 *Italics*

The names of ships, vehicles and aircraft are italicised. Scientific names are also italicised.

SV *Nomad*; FV *Rachel*; HMS *Endeavour;* MV *Achilles*

Cordyline terminalis; Caranx melampygus

The names of newspapers, books, SPREP publications, documents and journal names (appearing within running text) are italicised.

The *New York Times, SPREP-Tok*

Use italics for words that you want to emphasise or draw particular attention to.

It's not a question of *what*; it's a question of *how.*

People suffering from surface dyslexia have particular difficulty with words, such as *yacht*, that are irregularly spelt.

Non-English words in a document written in English, non-French in a document written in French, should be italicised.

Everyone looks forward to the Rotuman practice of *fara.*
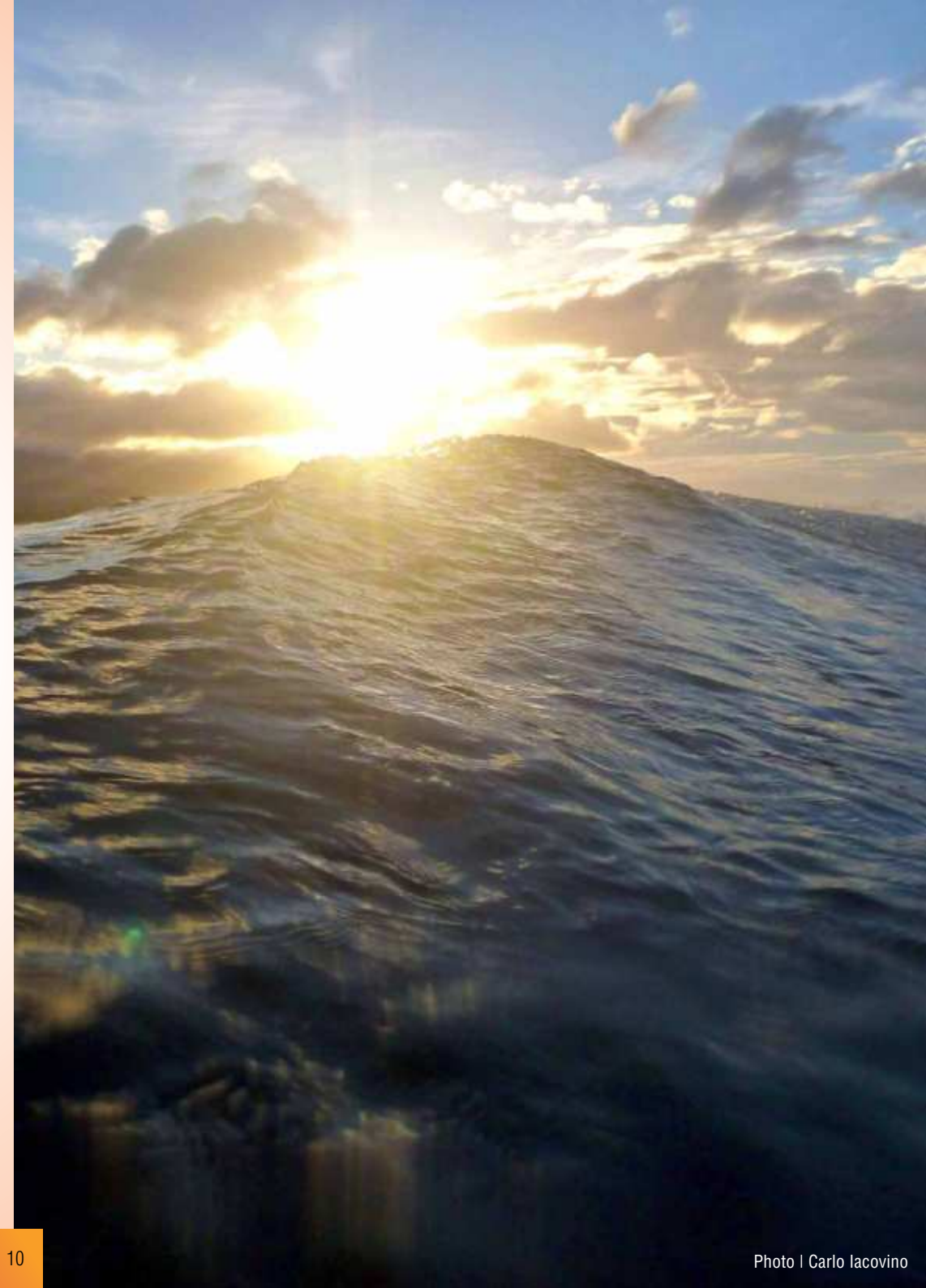
6 Numbers

General

Write the numbers ten and below in words (except in a range such as 9–11); all others should be written as numerals.

Do not combine single-digit figures and words using hyphens (for example, a 2-hour journey).

a two-hour journey, a three-year period, a four-door car

With hundreds, thousands and so on, there is a choice of using figures or words. 300 or three hundred (but not 3 hundred)

Do not start a sentence with a figure or a symbol followed by a figure. These should be written out, or the sentence should be rephrased.

When two numbers are next to one another, it is often preferable to spell out one of them.

ninety 50-gram weights, seventy 25-franc stamps

Commas with numbers

Use a comma in numbers above 999.

1,5600 10,132; 654,321

Numbers with units of measurement

We try not to abbreviate units of measurement. If you do, always use figures with abbreviations or symbols.

10°C, 1000 nm, 50 ml, 250 kW, 5 km or five kilometres, *but not* five km

Ranges of numbers and dates

from XPF 20 million to XPF 30 million

between 10°C and 70°C

If the symbol or multiple remains the same, insert a closed-up en dash between the figures.

XPF 20–30 million; 10°–70°C; 68–90 km² *but not* from XPF 20–30 million; between 10°–70°C)

Write a range of days and dates as follows: 12–18 May 2014, 29 May–3 June 2013, 1870–1901, 1996–2006.

Dates and time

Write out the month, preceded by a simple figure for the day: 23 July, 2014 *not* 23rd July, 2014. Use all four digits when referring to specific years: 2012 *not* '12.

When writing times using the 12-hour system, separate the hour and minute with a colon. Use am or pm to indicate the division of the day.

4:30 am, 2:15 pm, 12 noon

When using the 24-hour system, do not use any punctuation.

1430 (to express 2:30 pm); 0800 (to express 8:00 am)

NB: Do not truncate or shorten dates.

1990–1995 (*not* 1990–95), between 1990 and 1995 (*not* between 1990–95), 1990 to 1995 inclusive (*not* 1990–95 inclusive)

Decades and centuries

When referring to decades and centuries, do not use an apostrophe.

the 1990s, the mid-1950s

7 *Abbreviations*

Text containing a lot of abbreviations can look daunting, so use them only when they are necessary or meaningful.

Use an abbreviation when:

- the full version is long, for example Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region project; and/or

- the term is used more than twice in the document; and/or

- you can be sure your reader will know what it stands for (for example, if the full version has just been used in the text or it is a very well-known one, such as SPREP).

If you decide an abbreviation is called for, put it in brackets after the first mention of the full version and thereafter use the abbreviation.

Don't put an abbreviation in brackets after the full version unless you are going to use it later on.

Abbreviations that are the initial letters of names of organisations, institutions, projects etc. are usually upper cased. They are not separated by full stops.

ADB, ANU, SPC, SPREP *not* S.P.R.E.P

Using 'an' before an abbreviation

This should be based on the way an abbreviation is read. The choice of 'a' or 'an' depends on the pronunciation of the first letter.

a UN resolution; an SPC publication; an AIDS manifesto

Using 'the' before an abbreviation

Do not use 'the' before an abbreviation, unless it acts as an adjective: SPREP is an international organisation (*not* The SPREP is a regional organisation) *but* the SPREP mandate.

Single abbreviated words

These take a full stop: Jan. Sun. Co. fig. etc. unless the last letter of the word is included in the abbreviation: Dr Mme Ltd *not* Dr. or Mr.

Foreign language abbreviations

Untranslated foreign language abbreviations should retain the capitalisation and punctuation conventions of the original.

8 *Units of measurement and scientific symbols*

Per cent symbol

The per cent sign (%) sits directly next to the figure, unlike French practice.

Note that percentage is one word, but per cent is two words. In nontechnical text, spell out per cent rather than using the symbol.

In scientific writing, metric measure is the accepted form for expressing quantities.

Names of basic and derived international system (SI) units of measurement are always lower cased when they are written out in full, even if they are derived from a personal name, such as ampere, kelvin, hertz, watt.

Symbols for units of measurement are normally abridged forms of the names of these units. They are written without stops, with a space between the number and the unit, and do not have plurals.

4 ha, 9 m, 10 kg, 20 psi

When writing dollar amounts in a specific currency, do not use the dollar symbol.

USD 4,500,000 *not* USD $4,500,000.

For readability, USD 4.5 million.

9 Lists

Lists of short items (without main verbs) that appear in bullet form should be introduced by a full sentence and have the following features:

- introductory colon
- no initial capitals
- no punctuation (very short items) or comma after each item
- a full stop at the end.

Where each item completes the introductory sentence, you should:

- begin with the introductory colon;
- label each item (using no initial capital) with the appropriate bullet, number or letter;
- end each item with a semicolon; and
- close with a full stop.

If all items are complete sentences without a grammatical link to the introductory sentence, follow the instructions below.

- Do not introduce the list with a colon.
- Label each item with the appropriate bullet, number or letter.
- Start each item with a capital letter.
- End each one with a full stop.
- Try to avoid running the sentence on after the list of points.

If any one item consists of several complete sentences, announce the list with a main sentence and continue as indicated below.

- Do not introduce the list with a colon.
- Label each item with the appropriate bullet, number or letter.
- Begin each item with a capital letter.
- End each item with a full stop. This allows several sentences to be included under a single item without throwing punctuation into confusion.
- The list of points may extend over several pages, making it essential not to introduce it with an incomplete sentence or colon.

Where each item completes the introductory sentence, and then has another complete sentence added:

- use no initial capital. In the case of a proper noun, however, you must begin with an initial capital;
- label each item. If the items are to be discussed, it is useful to use numbers or letters rather than bullet points, for easy reference;
- end each item with a semi-colon. The exception to this is that the last item ends with a full stop;
- introduce the list with a semi-colon.

10 *Tables, figures and graphs*

Table captions generally sit above the table. Diagrams, figures and graphs should be labelled below.

Ensure that, where these illustrate something in the text, there is a reference to it in the text.

> These rainfall statistics (Figure 5) are worrying.

11 *Scientific names*

Scientific names (family, genus and species)

The names of genera, species and subspecies (varieties, cultivars) are always italicised.

The initial letter of the genus in a scientific name is capitalised, while the species name is always lower cased, even if it is derived from a proper noun. Family names are not italicised.

> Family: Araceae
> *Genus: Colocasia*
> *species*: *Colocasia esculenta*

The genus name should be spelled out in full the first time it appears in the text and subsequently abbreviated: *Escherichia coli,* abbreviated *E. coli.* If another genus name is introduced into the text with the same initial as one already in use, then both genus names should be spelled out in full from that point on to avoid confusion.

Common or vernacular names

Those that are familiar to the reader should not be bolded or italicised, but left the same as the surrounding text (e.g. a taro plant; a taboo area). They should also not be capitalised unless they include a proper name.

> Galapagos shark, Asian papaya fruit fly,
>
> but
>
> blacktip reef shark, melon fruit fly

12 *Referencing style*

Different publishing houses and journals have their own style for formatting references. SPREP uses a combination of the CBE Scientific Style and Format and the Vancouver system.

Bibliographies and references lists

A list of references gives a complete citation of all the works cited in the text. A bibliography is a list of references, plus sources used in compiling the document but not necessarily cited within the text.

In-text citations

Use the author–date system: the author's surname and the year of publication (without a comma separating the two), and enclosed in round brackets.

> The incidence of NCDs in the Pacific region is increasing rapidly (McDonald 1999).

Punctuation in citations

A comma followed by a space separates citations of different references by the same author.

> On average, women on Kosrae fish four times a week (Smith 1998, 1999a,1999b).

Separate references by different authors with a semicolon.

> Tuna stocks in the western and central Pacific Ocean will soon be extinct (Hampton 1998; Lawson 2000).

MULTIPLE AUTHORS

For two authors, use both surnames, joined by 'and'; for three or more authors use the first author's surname, followed by et al.

> (Dawson and Briggs 1996; Luciani et al. 1997)

NB: 'et al.' is not italicised, and takes a full stop.

References lists (general)

Since the primary purpose of a reference is to enable people locate the source, include only those references that can be located, either in print or electronic versions. Documents that cannot be accessed, such as and some unpublished documents, should be listed separately under a suitable heading.

In general, SPREP uses minimal punctuation and capitalisation in all references.

Titles of foreign language works or names of publishers should not be translated into English or italicised.

Within a reference list, do not write out in full some journal names and abbreviate others. For example, the Journal of Pacific History can be abbreviated to J Pac Hist. Both are acceptable but only one form should be used within any given list of references or documents.

Journal articles

ONE AUTHOR:

Johannes, R.E. 1982. Traditional conservation methods and protected areas in Oceania. Ambio 11(5):258–261.

MULTIPLE AUTHORS:

Chou, R. and Lee, H.B. 1997. Commercial marine fish farming in Singapore. Aquaculture Research 28:767–776.

Book

MULTIPLE AUTHORS:

Cambie, R.C. and Ash,J. 1994. Fijian medicinal plants. Australia: CSIRO. 365 p.

EDITORS AS AUTHORS:

Gilman A.G., Rall T.W., Nies A.S. and Taylor P. (eds). 1990. The pharmacological basis of therapeutics. 8th edn. New York: Pergamon. 1811p.

Chapter from a book

Haines A.K. 1982. Traditional concepts and practices and inland fisheries management. p. 279–291. In: Morauta, L., Pernetta, J. and Hearney, W. (eds). Traditional conservation in Papua New Guinea: Implications for today. Boroko: Institute for Applied Social and Economic Research.

Proceedings and conference reports and papers presented at conferences

Seret B. and Sire J-Y. (eds). 1999. 5th Indo-Pacific Fish Conference; 1997 3–8 November; Noumea, New Caledonia. Paris: Société Française d'Ichtyologie. 866 p.

Nietschmann B. 1984. Indigenous island peoples, living resources, and protected areas. p.333–343. In: National parks, conservation, and development: The role of protected areas in sustaining society. McNeely J.A. and Miller K.R. (eds). Proceedings of the World Congress on National Parks, Bali Indonesia, 11–22 October 1982. Washington D.C: Smithsonian Institute Press.

Dissertations and theses

Ritzmann R.E. 1974. The snapping mechanism of Alpheid shrimps. PhD dissertation. Charlottesville (VA): University of Virginia. 59 p.

Newspaper articles

Rensberger B. and Specter B. 1989 Aug 7. CFCs may be destroyed by natural processes. Washington Post; Sect A:2(col 5).

Electronic citations

Information on the internet can appear and disappear with no notice or warning. Therefore, electronic citations are somewhat less reliable than hardcopy documentation such as journal articles or books. Because of this, it is best to cite only websites that are relatively stable (e.g. that of an international organisation or government).

Also, because web-based information is relatively new, conventions and guidelines for citing such information are subject to change and vary among different publishing houses. The main point is to provide the reader with enough information so that he or she can locate the website you are referencing, and that you are consistent in how you reference online material.

SPREP conventions for citing websites and web-based information are outlined below.

Referencing a website

To cite information within your document from an online source, include the name of the source and the year it was posted, copyrighted or last updated, if possible. For example:

> Papua New Guinea is home to more than 700 species of birds and of the 43 known species of bird of paradise, 38 species are found here – 36 of which are found nowhere else in the world (The Nature Conservancy 2002).

In your List of References, provide full details, including the name of the website, year the information was posted (copyrighted or last updated), the URL, and the date the information was retrieved from the Internet.

For the example above, this would be:

> The Nature Conservancy. 2002. http://nature.org/wherewework/asiapacific/papuanewguinea/.
> Accessed 10 September 2002.

Another example:

> Mahi mahi are a highly migratory species found in tropical and subtropical waters of the Indian, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans (FishBase 2001).

The full reference is:

> FishBase. 2001. http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.cfm?genusname=Coryphaena &speciesname=hippurus. Accessed 2 July 2001.

Referencing an online journal article

> Jacobson J.W., Mulick J.A. and Schwartz A.A. 1995. A history of facilitated communication: Science, pseudoscience, and antiscience: Science working group on facilitated communication. American Psychologist 50: 750–765. http://www.apa.org/journals/jacobson.html. Accessed 25 January 1996.

> Stone R. 2000. European Union to fund science in Balkan region. Science 290(5500):2230.
> http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/290/5500/2230a.
> Accessed 18 July 2001.

Putting references in order

Two or more references by the same author, should be ordered by date; i.e. oldest first, most recent last.

Chapman M.D. 1985. Environmental influences on the development of traditional conservation in the South Pacific region. Environmental Conservation 12(3):217–230.

Chapman M.D. 1987. Women's fishing in Oceania. Human Ecology 15(3):267–287.

Several references where one or more authors is common to all of them:

Alcala A.C. 1988. Effects of marine reserves on coral fish abundances and yields of Philippine coral reefs. Ambio 17:184–199.

Alcala A.C. and Luchavex T. 1981. Fish yield of the coral reef surrounding Apo Island, central Visayas, Philippines. Marine Biology 8:69–73.

Alcala A.C. and Russ G.R. 1990. A direct test of the effects of protective management on abundance and yield of tropical marine resources. Journal of Conservation 46:40–47.

More examples

Nunn P. 1991. Causes of environmental changes on Pacific Islands in the last millennium. p. 8–19. In: Johnston, T. and Flenley, J.R. (eds). Aspects of environmental change. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Massey University Press.

Nunn P. and Diamond J. 1990. Sea level rise in the Pacific and the effects on human populations. Journal of Conservation 46:81–97.

Nunn P., Diamond J. and Allen B.J. 1999. Climate change in the Pacific region. Pacific Ecology 23:15–23.

SPREP
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A resilient Pacific environment sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.