

## 10. *Spelling and Compound Words*

### SPELLING

**10.1** The general authority on the spelling of words in AFS publications is *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (as updated by the current edition of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*). In some cases, however, sense or the customary usage in the fisheries profession require deviations from the forms given in this dictionary.

See Appendix A for a list of the accepted spellings of words and phrases commonly found in fisheries writing.

### Variants

**10.2** Use U.S. rather than British spellings.

When the variants have equal weight (indicated by the conjunction “or” in the dictionary), use the shorter one:

totaled *not* totalled

If the variants are the same length, either may be used.

When the variants do not have equal weight (indicated by the conjunction “also”), use the first one regardless of length:

cancellation *not* cancelation

### Words with Prefixes

**10.3** In general, prefixes should be closed up with the root words to which they are attached:

nonintuitive antioxidant prechallenge

Extensive lists of words with common prefixes may be found in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*.

### EXCEPTIONS

**10.4** Use a hyphen after the prefix if the root word is capitalized:

non-Canadian neo-Darwinism

mid-April *but* from mid to late April

- 10.5** Use a hyphen after the prefix if the word would otherwise be ambiguous or hard to read:

un-ionized cross-sectional multi-institutional  
*but* preexisting microorganism

- 10.6** Use hyphens when more than one prefix is used with the same root word or the root word is compound:

over- or underrepresented  
pre-yolk-sac

non-point-source pollution *but* point source pollution

## COMPOUND WORDS

- 10.7** The spelling of compound words can be tricky; authors should consult the following authorities (in this order) for any such words that they use: (1) Appendix A, (2) *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (or the current edition of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*), and (3) the principles given below.

Section 7.90 of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (15th edition) also contains useful examples, though it occasionally deviates from AFS style.

### Noun Forms

- 10.8** In general, compounds that serve as nouns are left open (i.e., with spaces between the individual words) unless the constituent parts are closely linked or the compounds are generally recognized:

main stem open water radio tag  
fishpond riverbed seawater

A few technical terms have hyphens, however:

age-class eye-up net-pen

(Note that this is not a complete list of such terms.)

### Adjective Forms

- 10.9** Compounds that serve as adjectives are treated in various ways, depending on the particular form and its position in the sentence.

NOUN–NOUN COMBINATIONS

**10.10** Compounds consisting of two or more nouns are usually left open:

age structure differentials sea surface temperatures

However, they may be hyphenated to avoid awkwardness or ambiguity:

population-level analyses

NOUN–VERB PARTICIPLE COMBINATIONS

**10.11** Compounds consisting of a noun and a present or past participle are hyphenated:

decision-making authority oxygen-depleted waters

ADJECTIVE–NOUN COMBINATIONS

**10.12** Compounds consisting of an adjective and a noun are hyphenated unless the open form is very familiar:

main-stem reaches second-order stream cost-effective measures  
*but* high school participants

COMBINATIONS INVOLVING ADVERBS

**10.13** Compounds containing an adverb that ends in “-ly” are never hyphenated:

rapidly changing situation

**10.14** With the exceptions noted in section 10.15, compounds containing other adverbs are hyphenated:

well-written article much-replicated research

**10.15** Compounds containing “very,” “most,” and “least” are left open:

very respected scientist least intensive effort

COMBINATIONS INVOLVING UNITS OF MEASURE

**10.16** Compounds containing units of measure are hyphenated:

1.5-mg/L treatment

PREDICATE POSITION

**10.17** Compounds that appear after the nouns they modify are left open:

These measures were cost effective. The article was well written.

Verb Forms

**10.18** The treatment of compounds that serve as verbs is so irregular that no general rules can be given:

run off break up grow out

dipnet download livetraps

mass-mark PIT-tag air-dry

To determine which form to use, consult the references given in section 10.7.

Use of En Dashes

**10.19** In AFS publications, en dashes are used instead of hyphens in compounds in which the en dash stands for “and,” “to,” or “at”:

Beverton–Holt analysis length–weight ratio University of California–Davis

*but* Smith–Root [official name]