# Guidelines for Writing a Marine Ecology Paper

Please review the following guidelines prior to submitting your manuscript to Marine Ecology. The suggestions which follow are designed to address problems frequently observed in submitted manuscripts. Thank you.

The Editors

**Title.** Please make sure your title reflects the main theme of the paper but is general and interesting enough to attract broad interest. Try to include key words that reflect scientific themes, processes, habitat types, organisms and or regions that may be searched by authors looking for work in your subject.

Example:
*Not Recommended:* The effects of variable branching patterns in *Salicornia virginica* on light penetration, moisture and evaporation in Mission Bay, California.
*Suggested:* The influence of plant architecture on edaphic conditions in a southern California salt marsh.

**Abstract.** This should briefly introduce the problem, state your approach, give key results, present their implications and provide take-home messages for the reader, all in less than 1 page. Often readers will decide whether to view the rest of the manuscript based on the abstract, so it should be well written. Ideally this should be prepared last, after the remainder of the paper is completed.

**Introduction:** This should provide the rationale for your study and relevant background material. Note: the absence of data on a topic is not a sufficient rationale. Please explain the significance of the subject or problem.

**Objectives Statement:** This should be given in a paragraph at the end of the introduction. Please explain your project goals and state explicit questions or hypotheses that your research is trying to address. Purely descriptive papers are not encouraged. We highly recommend that you write the objectives statement first, and shape the introduction, results and discussion around the specific questions addressed in the paper.

**Study Site Description.** If appropriate, this should be brief and should be laced at the beginning of the methods section. It does not belong in the introduction.

**Methods.** Please explain your sampling or experimental design clearly. Make sure your treatments are replicated. (See Hurlbert 1984 for more information). For example, a one-year study should not discuss seasonality, because the seasons are not replicated.
Please make sure your statements are supported by statistical tests wherever possible and that the statistics applied are appropriate to your experimental design.

**Results:**

- Please try to organize this section around the objectives, questions, or hypotheses stated earlier.

- Please write about the science and not the statistics. Try to avoid using statistical tests as the subject or object of your sentence. Use the statistics only as supporting data, ideally presented in parentheses at the end of a sentence.

Example:
*Not recommended:* ANOVA showed that plants with 7, 8 or 9 branches generated greater light reduction that plants with 1, 2 and 3 or 4, 5 and 6 branches at P = 0.012.
*Recommended:* Light reduction was greater under heavily branched plants (7-9 branches) than under plants with moderate (4-6) or few (1-3) branches (ANOVA, $F_{2, 18} = 3.45$; P=0.012).

**Tables and Figures.** Please keep these few in number and condensed (multiple panels) when possible. Do not repeat data by presenting identical data in the text and in the tables or figures.

**Discussion.**

- Organize this around your objectives, questions and hypotheses.
- Be sure to compare your results to relevant studies in other regions, other settings or with different organisms.
- Please assess the broad implications of your findings so that others will find your work interesting.
- *Make sure that your paper contains a clear statement about what aspects of your work are novel and what contribution the paper makes to your field of study*. Ideally this should appear in the abstract and in the discussion.
- Only include a conclusions section if you go beyond a restatement of results, to discuss broader implications.