

**Pitfalls in Writing Course Paper**  
**(not in any particular order)**  
**\* = especially important!**

- \*1) Follow categories in instructions for writing assignment concerning a family of fish!!
- \*2) Better organization of paper through use of topic sentences and paragraphs! Each paragraph should have a topic sentence, and the paragraphs should be linked together in a logical order.
- \*3) Watch grammar and spelling, and write in a scientific style.
- 4) Use subheadings as appropriate within each category.
- 5) Use more primary literature (not just books), and do not cite websites!
- 6) Cite information provided in the text that clearly comes from another source.
- 7) Follow citation format in text: author, year; if multiple authors at a place within text, put in order chronologically
- 8) Avoid “choppy sentences” – sentences that are too short and could be combined with other sentences for better flow.
- 9) Use “while” when you mean something having to do with current time; use “whereas” or “although” otherwise
- 10) All measurements listed should be metric: kilograms (kg) instead of pounds, centimeters (cm) instead of inches, etc. When following a number, using abbreviated form: e.g., kg and not kilograms
- 11) Use italics for latin species names, but don’t use for families, subfamilies, orders, etc.
- 12) Do not use capital letters for common names or for references to families; e.g., lowercase letters for labrids or labroids, but use capital letter for Labridae
- 13) Genus is capitalized, species is not: e.g., *Chromis punctipinnis*
- 14) Don’t just list what each species does within a category; build a framework with clear flow.
- 15) When using figures, put a figure legend below figure. Cite the source of the figure if you didn’t make it yourself.