

Stylistic advice for Ge121a papers and maps, fall 2009

1. In a formal geological field report, you should always spell out the formation name (i.e., Bonanza King Formation) or abbreviate it (Cbk, or Bonanza King Fm.) each time it is used. Don't just call it "Bonanza King" even though we do this frequently in colloquial speech. Similarly you should write out "Basin and Range Province" (not just Basin and Range) or "Mojave Desert" (not just "the Mojave").
2. Be careful of the spelling of homonyms: discreet/discrete; principle/principal, areal/aerial
3. Cite references in the body of the text as appropriate so that the ideas of previous authors are clearly credited.
4. If a unit is lithified, it should be described as such. If it is lithified it is a *sedimentary rock*, not *sediment*.
5. "Volcanic" is an adjective; the use of the word "volcanics" as a noun is colloquial. Rather you should write "volcanic rocks" unless the word is in a proper name such as "Shoshone Volcanics". Similarly, "lithics" should be written as "lithic fragments".
6. The words "strike" and "dip" describe planar features, and "trend" and "plunge" describe linear features. Thus, faults *strike* – they do not *trend*.
7. The word "outcrop" is a noun. It is preferable to use "crop out" for the verb, to avoid confusion.
8. Please be aware of the correct spelling of formation and geographic names.
9. Cross sections should always have horizontal and vertical scales drawn on them.
10. A map legend should always include symbols used for bedding/foliation etc. and line styles used for contacts and faults.
11. The map fields and cross section fields should all be labeled with their unit abbreviations, whether or not they are colored in or have different patterns.
12. Reports should have page numbers.
13. Numbers with absolute values less than one should have a zero before the decimal point; i.e., one-half should be 0.5, not .5. This is because if the reader can't see very well or if the photocopy is inferior, they may not notice the decimal point, and it would totally change the meaning of what you had intended to write.
14. Describe clast size by the diameter. Avoid ambiguous descriptions such as "5 cm large".
15. Normally if we are talking about thickness of beds, distances, etc. we write a space between the number and the measurement unit. So, for example, five meters is 5 m, not 5m.

See the AGU style sheet http://www.agu.org/pubs/author_style_guide.pdf for lots of other details of usage and style.