

HOW TO WRITE AN INTERPRETATION SIGN

A good piece of interpretation will:

- Capture the attention of your audience and get them engaged.
- Be interesting and engaging.
- Include the messages you want them know.
- Provide a connection between the subject (e.g. an animal) and the reader.
- Be clear and easy to understand.

Before you start:

- **What are your aims?** What do you want the reader to know?
- **What is the topic?** What are the key messages you want the reader to remember? Don't use too many topics on one sign, try to stick to one or two messages.
- **What are your learning objectives?** This is the information that you want your audience to remember. For example: you want people to know that Lowland anoa a very rare species of wild cattle found on the islands of Sulawesi and Buton. They are threatened by hunting and habitat loss but people can take action to help to protect them. These key points help to structure the content of your sign.
- **Consider your audience** - are you writing mainly for children or adults, school groups or families? Knowing your audience will help you to write your sign and decide on the language you use.
- **Location** - where is your sign going to go? Can it be seen by oncoming visitors?
- **Size & material** - are they suitable for the location? e.g. use weatherproof materials for an outdoor location.
- **How much will the sign cost?** Does the proposed sign fit within your budget?
- **How will you install your sign?** What fixings do you need?

When writing:

Make it easy to understand

- Write in clear, simple language and in short sentences. A good guide is to aim at a 9-12 year old reading level. Your audience may be older but the majority of people can understand text written at this level.
- Avoid using technical terms or simply listing facts and figures. Instead **tell a story**.
- Use comparisons to make the text relatable to the reader (e.g. an elephant can weigh the same as

two large cars).

- Only use one idea per sentence.
- **Font size**- Ensure text is large enough to read from a suitable distance and easily visible against the background.
- **Which languages to use** - which languages do the majority of your visitors speak? If creating a bilingual sign, ensure that the translation is checked by a fluent speaker and that the text makes sense in both languages.
- Address the reader in the first person. Refer to them as 'you' where relevant. They will feel more engaged.
- Include good quality images to make your sign appealing, but make sure they relate directly to the key message and text.

The facts

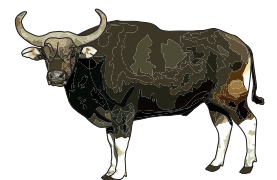
- Get your information from a reliable source such as IUCN or peer reviewed papers (*see the list of suggested sources of information*).
- When you have written your text, check it with the experts in your organisation.
- Include common name, scientific name and IUCN status on generic species information signs.

Getting it right

- Check for errors and edit where needed.

When it's printed

- When choosing the location for your sign think about ease of access. Is it low enough for children or wheelchair users? Is it facing your audience as they walk towards it?
- Think about where in the zoo your interpretation will go. If it is about a specific species then it makes sense to place it at that species' enclosure. More general information could be positioned in an area of the zoo where people spend time but there is not a lot going on e.g. a seating area. If you will refer to the information on the sign when working with school children, you may wish to display it in the classroom too.
- Does it have other uses? Can you put it online for a wider audience or for schools to download and use?
- Will the sign need any maintenance? This could be as simple as wiping dust off the front or planning out a maintenance schedule to make sure the sign is in good condition.



**GLOBAL SPECIES
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

ANOA
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BABIRUSA



MADE BY
CHESTER ZOO