Spanish Style Guide
for National Park Service interpretive media

*Guidelines to help translators, contractors, interpreters, rangers, writers, and editors working on NPS Spanish-language publications, museum texts, film scripts, subtitles, audio descriptions, outdoor wayside exhibits, and signs*

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SECTION 1: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1.01 Literalness

Avoid word-for-word translation. Try instead to convey the heart of each idea. Clarity of meaning and natural Spanish phrasing matter more than matching the word order of your original English. We do not want the appearance that Spanish-language materials seen or heard in national parks were first written in English, and then translated in a hasty, mechanical way.

1.02 Respect the audience

Park visitors who only read Spanish should be just as effectively engaged as English-only readers. Spanish readers should not be bored by a baby talk Spanish. Nor should they be bogged down by complex, strange or unnatural wording that come about when translation software robotically forces Spanish to mirror the word order of the original English.

1.03 Use neutral Spanish

Aim for a non-regional Spanish similar to what we hear today in news broadcasts on the major international television cable channels, such as Univisión or Telemundo or CNN Español. Avoid word choices that are closely associated only with a particular nation or region.

1.04 Visual parity

Treat your two audiences with equality. If designers put Spanish texts below English on bilingual exhibits or publications, it gives Spanish-only readers the impression that the English-reading audience is more important, and that the Spanish-reading audience is not as important.

If designers place English texts on the left and Spanish texts to the right, you will have no complaints.

For publications, the cleanest, least confusing solution is to create a Spanish-only document and an English-only document.

1.05 Titles can differ

Spanish titles should quickly engage reader interest. This usually involves extra time and effort to think of a workable new title in Spanish. The very best Spanish titles for important interpretive ideas are probably not exact translations of the original English titles.

1.06 Sentence length

Spanish can have longer sentences than editors usually recommend for English written for the NPS. If your draft translated Spanish reads in a choppy, unnatural way, consider combining some of the short sentences to make it flow in a way more normal in Spanish prose writing. Meaning matters more than a literal match to the English.
SECTION 2: **CAPITALIZATION**

Double-check to make sure that any texts submitted in Spanish conform to the accepted Spanish rules, not the English norms taught in the United States. There are significant differences.

In regions where many people know and use both English and Spanish on a daily basis, expect confusion about the rules of capitalization — in both languages.

Here are the capitalization errors that commonly crop up:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.01 Days of the week</th>
<th>per English rule</th>
<th>Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>per Spanish rule</td>
<td>lunes, martes, miércoles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.02 River/mountain names</th>
<th>per English rule</th>
<th>Mississippi River</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>per Spanish rule</td>
<td>río Misisipí</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(lowercase RIVER río)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

on maps along stream line alternate on maps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.03 Tribe and nation names</th>
<th>per English rule</th>
<th>English, German, Seminole, Apache</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>per Spanish rule</td>
<td>inglés, alemán, seminola, apache</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.04 Titles of books, exhibits</th>
<th>per English rule</th>
<th>Most words in a title capitalized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit title</td>
<td>“Plaza—The Heart of the Pueblo”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book title</td>
<td>For Whom the Bell Tolls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>per Spanish rule</th>
<th>Only the FIRST word capitalized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit title</td>
<td>Plaza—el centro del pueblo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book title</td>
<td>Por quién doblan las campanas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SECTION 3: 

VERB FORMS & PRONOUN CHOICES

3.01 Command verb forms

The problem: commands in English often do not carry a clear sense of the degree of formality, nor the number of persons being addressed. Spanish verbs must have these concepts embedded in the verb form.

Default for Spanish in NPS documents and exhibits should be the formal command verb forms, singular rather than plural. We assume an individual is reading the publication or the outdoor wayside exhibit or the indoor exhibit.

Some NPS exhibit texts ask for visitors to act safely or obey rules in nice, light-handed, often oblique terms.

Experience and evaluations show that this light-handed approach is often ignored. Use clear, direct imperative verb forms in Spanish, especially for safety messages.

3.02 YOU: formal or informal?

The pronoun YOU in English can be either singular or plural, and carries few clues as to the degree of formality or familiarity of the relationship of the writer/speaker to the reader or listener.

Determine how formal your Spanish text needs to be, working with client park personnel that know the intended audience.

Will the formal second person singular —USTED— or the informal second person singular —TU— work best to achieve the goals?
SECTION 4: PUNCTUATION

Make sure your texts’ punctuation follows the accepted Spanish rules. Check the Chicago Manual of Style, Sections 9.68 through 9.79.

If you have other doubts, major Spanish-language newspapers post their style guides on the Internet.

In areas of the United States where many people know and see both languages daily, expect confusion, especially about comma use.

Punctuation problems that have shown up many times in submittals for review are:

4.01 Comma use in sequences

per English rule first, second, and third
per Spanish rule primero, segundo y tercero

Note: NO comma is placed immediately before $Y (AND)$

4.02 Initial question mark ¡
Initial exclamation mark ¡

Spanish interrogatory and exclamatory sentences must start with an upside down question mark and an upside down exclamation mark before the first word of the sentence.

These two symbols exist in all ASCII character sets. With either Mac or PC computers, there are always ways to include them in Spanish texts and publications.

4.03 Vowels with accents

A word in Spanish without its proper accented vowel is a misspelled word. Accents are not optional in any Spanish-language products created for the National Park Service.

Keystrokes exist to create all the special characters needed to write Spanish correctly on both Mac and PC computers.

Some people have argued that accented vowels are no longer necessary for writing correct Spanish. Advertising materials often omit accents, particularly when they are using all caps to attract attention. This no-accent practice produces work that looks shoddy and unprofessional.
SECTION 5: NUMBERS

5.01 Round off

Numbers seen in NPS publications, outdoor waysides, and indoor exhibits seldom express precise measurements. When writers say a trail is "a quarter-mile long," they are implying it is about a quarter of a mile, not a rigorously exact 0.2500 mile—and not a fraction of an inch more.

Calculators that convert miles to kilometers and inches/feet to meters assume exact quantities and give results with exactitude. A calculator converts "quarter-mile trail" into 402.3 meters. Writing a converted distance this way implies a degree of very high precision that is — wrong.

The common sense goal here is to make a distance or weight quick to read and easy to understand.

Round off trail distances in miles to tenths of a mile. For short trails, round off the distance to the nearest 50 meters/yards.

Use common sense when rounding off large weights. Go for quick and easy-to-understand comparison.

Recommended
- quarter mile: 400 metros (about) 500 lbs. 230 kg

Not recommended
- 0.25 mile: 402.3 metros (about) 500 lbs. 227 kg

5.02 Separators

Decimal point
- per USA practice 7.62 mm 10.5 kg
- per Spanish practice 7,62 mm 10,5 kg

Thousands, millions
- per USA practice 43,000 tons 6,500,000 casualties
- per Spanish practice 43,000 toneladas 6,500,000 bajas

In the United States we separate whole numbers from decimals with a period. Commas separate every three places in very large numbers. Many other nations mark the smaller-than-a-whole-number separation with a comma.

Determine what will work best with your intended audience. Some national parks choose to stay with the USA standard separators. Some national parks have chosen the alternate comma as decimal point system for their Spanish.
A billion in English is NOT equal to 1 billón in Spanish.

English-speakers use a different name system for very large numbers than most of Europe and Latin America, where the large-number name changes only every 6 digits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Spanish/Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000,000</td>
<td>billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000,000,000</td>
<td>trillion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000,000,000,000</td>
<td>quadrillion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000,000,000,000,000</td>
<td>quintillion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 6: GENERAL FORMATS AND RULES TO FOLLOW

6.01 Time Format

Latin American countries and Spain use the 24-hour format for stating time, rather than the 12-hour AM/PM format.

Recommended 16:00  19.00 hs
Not recommended  4:00 PM  7.00 PM

6.02 Date Format

Dates in text in Spanish follow the DD de MM de YYYY format, so when this is truncated for saving line space, it makes sense to give dates DD.MM.YYYY. Translating dates in full is a terrible line length/space waster.

Recommended  4 de julio de 1776
               4.7.1776
               04-VII-1776

Determine which hour-minute separator punctuation will work best for the anticipated audience.

6.03 Centuries

Use Roman numerals to express centuries. This differs from English editorial practice, where Roman numerals are often judged to be off-putting or a potential reader roadblock. Roman numerals for centuries are standard practice in the literate Spanish-speaking world.

English Style Guide  the 1900s, in the 1700s
Recommended  Siglo XX, en el siglo XVIII
Not recommended  Siglo 20, en el siglo 18

6.04 BC / AD

Recommended  a. C., d. C.
Not recommended  antes de la Era Común

Expressing dates as Common Era (CE) and Before Common Era (BCE) instead of A.D. and B.C. is not widely accepted in the Spanish-speaking world. Stay with BC/AD.

6.05 Decades

Recommended  en los años 1840 (note no final “S.”)
               En los años sesenta (1960s)
               Durante la década de 1840
Not recommended  en años 1840s
                 En años 1960s
                 Durante la década de los 1840s
6.06 Geographic names

Place names are not always the same in English and Spanish. Some common errors seen are:

- **Rio Grande River** in English
- **río Bravo del Norte** in Spanish

- **Havana** in English
- **la Habana** in Spanish

- **Grand Canyon** in English
- **el Gran Cañón del Colorado** in Spanish

Check resources like *Cassell’s Spanish Dictionary*, *Diccionario-Enciclopedia Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado*, *Gran Enciclopedia Hispánica* or [http://es.wikipedia.org/](http://es.wikipedia.org/)

6.07 States vs. Nations

On maps of North America, strive for label parity. Match nations’ names with nations’ names and states with states.

Texas, Arizona, California, and New Mexico are states.
The United States, México, and Canada are nations.

**Recommended**

- **UNITED STATES / MÉXICO**
- **CANADA / UNITED STATES**

**Alternate:**

- **CALIFORNIA, ARIZONA, NEW MEXICO**
- **BAJA CALIFORNIA, SONORA, CHIHUAHUA**
- **TEXAS**
- **CHIHUAHUA, COAHUILA, TAMAULIPAS**

**Not recommended**

- **ARIZONA / MÉXICO / MONTANA**

6.08 People’s names

Honor individuals by using their real name. Keep English names all English, and Spanish names all Spanish.

- **Recommended**
  - William Henry Gray
  - Guillermo Enrique Gris

- **Recommended**
  - Juan Ponce de León
  - John Ponce from Leon

Historic figures may be known in English textbooks by names that are not complete or not in the format that the Spanish-speaking world knows. Use their full name.

- **Francisco Coronado** in English
- **Francisco Vázquez de Coronado** in Spanish
6.09 Indian names

Honor individuals by using their real name wherever possible.

Translating an already translated-into-English Indian name doesn’t add much value for a Spanish-only reader. It is better to convey the actual sound of the original Indian name by spelling phonetically using the Spanish spelling system. Then reveal what the original Indian name meant.

Nez Perce name, translated Rabbit-Skin-Leggings
Not recommended  
Spelled phonetically  
(19th-century spelling)  
Heh-yooks Toe-nihn  
2nd variant spelling found Hee-oh’ks-te-kin  
Present-day Nez Perce heeyuxc tohon  
Spelled phonetically in Spanish Ji-lluks-tojón

In the 19th-century West, some Indians had a name in their first language and a Spanish name.

This was the case for the famous Chiricahua Apache leader GERONIMO (1829–1909). His Apache name was Go-yath-láy. He is famous in both English and Spanish as GERÓNIMO. Keep his name in Spanish (Gerónimo) for the best chance to connect stories to readers’ memories.

6.10 Use tribal names

For English NPS texts, we recommend using the name of the group of people we are talking about instead of the general noun INDIAN.

Follow the same principle in Spanish.

Avoid using the now popular term NATIVE AMERICAN.

Recommended  
los apache, los cayuse, los mikasuki
Not recommended  
los indios
Not recommended  
los nativos americanos
Not recommended  
los amerindios
Not recommended  
los indoamericanos

Remember tribe names remain lowercase in Spanish.
6.11 Use national names

Use the national name of a people instead of the general noun EUROPEANS when talking about the 1500s–1800s frontier, exploration, or settlement.

Avoid using the academic term EURO-AMERICAN.

Recommended  los españoles, ingleses, franceses
Not recommended  los europeos
Not recommended  los euro-americanos

Remember national names remain lowercase in Spanish.

6.12 Business names

Leave business names in their original English—or internationally best known form.

Recommended  Hudson’s Bay Company
Not recommended  Compañía de la Bahía de Hudson

When in doubt, you can check for widely known corporate names in Spanish history textbooks, or on the Internet.
6.13 Map labels

Keep bilingual maps in publications, exhibits, or waysides as uncluttered as possible.

Use pictograms to replace words wherever possible to avoid having so many English/Spanish labels on a map.

Use Spanish labels to convey the essence of meaning, not a literal translation of the English map labels. Especially watch out for governmental jargon that means little.

Divide labels into four groups: place names, easy cognates, essential orientation or safety information, and thematics.

Place names  **DO NOT TRANSLATE.**

Easy cognates  **DO NOT TRANSLATE IF WORDS ARE VERY SIMILAR.**

Recommended  Amphitheater, Picnic Area [STET]

Not recommended  Amphitheater Picnic Area

Anfiteatro  Área de picnic

Safety, Orientation  **USERS WILL NEED BOTH ENGLISH & SPANISH.**

Thematic labels  **USERS NEED BOTH ENGLISH & SPANISH.**

Use all small caps.

Examples:  WATER (FLOW), TRADEWINDS

Recommended  AGUA, VIENTOS ALISIOS

North Indicator  **USE THE SINGLE LETTER ABBREVIATION “N.”**

Scale Indicators  **USE THE ABBREVIATIONS “KM” AND “MI”** which work in both languages without translation.
SECTION 7:

PROBLEM WORDS AND SOLUTIONS

7.01 Alligators & gator holes

Recommended  
aligátor  aligatores
Not recommended  
caimán  yacaré  cocodrilo

The most widely distributed and well known crocodilians in Latin America are caimans. Some NPS naturalists have advocated using CAIMÁN in the place of ALIGÁTOR because this word is so easily recognized.

Some have argued that the word ALIGÁTOR looks like an Anglicism or a mistake. Ironically, the English word originally comes from Spanish.

The word ALIGÁTOR is proper Spanish. This is the right common name for Alligator mississippiensis. The word ALIGÁTOR is found in the Diccionario de la Real Academia Española. See http://buscon.rae.es/

In exhibits produced for Everglades NP, the colloquial — and unique to South Florida — expression GATOR HOLE was translated as CHARCO. The key idea to convey is that these are pools full of water, not that the gator holes are excavations.

7.02 América & Americans

CAVEAT

Citizens of the United States routinely call our country “AMERICA” and ourselves “AMERICANS.”

But, in Spanish the word AMÉRICA includes all the nations on the two continents between the Arctic Circle and Cape Horn. AMÉRICA is not just the USA, but North America, Central America, and South America. From Mexico south to Argentina, all Latin Americans consider themselves to be "Americans," because they live in the Americas.

This makes a slogan like EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA challenging to translate well into Spanish, because it begs the question of which AMERICA you want people to experience and to whom that AMERICA belongs.

The most accurate—and least offensive—way to refer to the peoples of the United States is ESTADOUNIDENSES. No exact equivalent for this word exists in English.

Recommended  
estadounidenses
Alternate  
norteamericanos
Not recommended  
americanos
Recommended  

**Estados Unidos de América**

If space limited  

**EE.UU.**

Informal expression  

**la unión americana**

Not recommended  

**América**

Keep in mind that after the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846–1848 half of land area of the Republic of Mexico was taken by the USA. Taking over the word AMERICAN to imply that it is property of U.S. citizens only has the potential to reopen historic resentments for many Spanish speakers.

7.03 Audio Description

For drama, exhibits, tours  

**audiodescription**

For film or TV  

**videodescription**

In English, the term AUDIO DESCRIPTION refers to all efforts to describe, in succinct terms, museum exhibits, wayside exhibits, plays, or videos for visitors who are blind or who have limited vision.

In Spanish, professionals who provide these services for the blind separate their products into the two terms seen above.

Some correct, polite Spanish terms for people who see poorly are **INVIDENTE** and **AMBLIOPE**. The condition of poor vision is **AMBLIOPIA**.

If you are working on a translation of an audio description script into Spanish, check online for the latest word choices and suggestions. In 2012, helpful resources for this kind of work were found in Barcelona, Spain, Mexico City, Mexico, and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

See:  

ONCE (Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles)

Comité Internacional Pro Ciegos IAP (México, D.F.)

Federación Argentina de Instituciones de Ciegos y Ambliopes
7.04 Backcountry

There is no widely accepted and well-understood translation of this concept in Spanish that truly matches the way the National Park Service casually uses this word to mean parts of national parks where there is little or no developed infrastructure for hikers or campers.

The *Diccionario Inglés-Español de La Universidad de Granada* gives this definition:

**backcountry (n.):**
- monte
- monte salvaje
- zona interior despoblada

All these possible renderings have a negative cast to them and refer to places that are backward or poorly developed.

Try to find a way to say your key thought without relying on NPS institutional phrasing in English, and avoid wasting people’s reading time by translating BACKCOUNTRY.

**Examples:**

**Backcountry permit**
- *Permiso de acampar en el monte*
- *Permiso de acampar en plena naturaleza*

**Backcountry trailhead**
- *Estacionamiento para campistas de la zona interior*

7.05 Barrier islands

**Recommended**
- *cordón litoral*

**Not recommended**
- *islas barreras*

The term ISLAS BARRERAS has been showing up on the Internet, mostly in documents written in English, then translated word-for-word by translation software.

The Spanish term most found in geography and geology textbooks is CORDÓN LITORAL.
7.06  
Bathrooms

Recommended  

(servicios sanitarios)

Acceptable  

(excusado, baños)

(aseos públicos, inodoro)

Less widely used  

(retrete, urinario)

Archaic (military architecture)  

(necesaria)

Not recommended  

(estación de consuelo, váter)

Reviewers working on a White Sands project in 2013 discovered that for many first-language-Spanish readers, the term BAÑO implies that there will be running water provided, hands may be washed, and flushing will occur.

If what you have is an outdoor pit toilet at a backcountry site, use LETRINA or RETRETE.

Don’t literally translate English euphemisms like COMFORT STATION and RESTROOMS word for word.

7.07  
Bayou

The French word BAYOU was critical for describing the life zones found in Gulf Islands National Seashore. We found no exact equivalent for BAYOU in Spanish. The translation team first suggested PANTANO (marsh, swamp). But bayous are not just static or tidal marshes, they usually involve very slow-moving creeks or arms of rivers.

Since travelers anywhere in the Gulf coast region will see the word BAYOU repeated many times on road signs and NPS maps, the review team decided the best solution was to keep it STET — not translated — and put it in italics to give the clue to Spanish-readers that it is a special foreign word.

7.08  
Billions  
CAVEAT

A billion in English is NOT equal to un billón en español.

1 billion in English = 1,000,000,000 = 10^9

1 billón in Spanish = 1,000,000,000,000 = 10^{12}

Avoid this very common error. Since the 1600s, Spanish-speaking countries—as well as most continental European nations—use what mathematicians call the “long scale” in naming large numbers.

1,000,000,000 (10^9) = mil millones o millardo en español.
7.09
Bird calls in Spanish

Naturalists often try to describe the sound of birdcalls with either mnemonic devices or phonetic spellings. During Spanish translation for new exhibits for Gulf Islands NS in 2009, reviewers uncovered the need to have phonetic spelling that is language-specific. How English speakers hear a bird song and spell it turned out to be radically different from how naturalists who are native speakers of Spanish heard and described the same sound.

Least bittern song in English: "oong-KA-chunk"

Least bittern song in Spanish: "tu-UM-tac-cuc"

When in doubt about how to phonetically spell a bird song in Spanish, get help from birder colleagues in Latin America.

7.10
Buffalo
*Bos bison bison*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Arcane</th>
<th>Not recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td>bisonte</td>
<td>cíbolo</td>
<td>toros mexicanos</td>
<td>búfalo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spanish</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hist. Term</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Historic</td>
<td>early 1500s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

North America’s largest herbivore has multiple names in both English and in Spanish. Naturalists prefer BISON over BUFFALO. Storytellers often like BUFFALO better because it is more widely known (in English popular writing) and so strongly associated with the Old West.

In the 1540s the word CÍBOLO came to be associated with this animal after the Coronado expedition passed through the land then called CÍBOLA.

The Spanish word BÚFALO properly refers to the Old World domesticated animal, not the monarch of the Plains.

7.11
Bugs
*CAVEAT*

**Avoid** using BICHO in NPS publications or exhibits.

In some countries, BICHO can just mean a “bug” or bothersome insect,— or a perverse person (all negative connotations). However in Puerto Rico, bicho is a very vulgar, offensive word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Not recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td>insecto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spanish</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>bicho</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.12 Bullet nomenclature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bullet Nomenclature</th>
<th>Spanish Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armor-Piercing</td>
<td>núcleo perforante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brass (Empty Case)</td>
<td>casquillo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breechloader</td>
<td>arma de retrocarga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullet</td>
<td>bala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centerfire</td>
<td>fuego central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conical Bullet</td>
<td>bala cónica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper Jacket</td>
<td>envoltura de latón</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Metal Jacket</td>
<td>bala blindada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollow Point</td>
<td>bala expansiva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Interior</td>
<td>núcleo de plomo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minie Ball</td>
<td>bala Minié</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muzzleloader</td>
<td>arma de avancarga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rimfire</td>
<td>fuego anular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Shot</td>
<td>monotiro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft-Point</td>
<td>bala semiblindada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripper Clip</td>
<td>peine de muelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wadcutter</td>
<td>sacabocados</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some older military cartridges have names with two numbers. The first number is the caliber (diameter expressed in hundredths of an inch). The second number can be either the year the bullet was designed or introduced — or the grains of (black) powder loaded in the brass case. Examples:

- .30-40 Krag-Jørgenson [2nd number is grains of powder]
- .30-06 Springfield [2nd number is year of introduction]
- .45-70 Springfield [2nd number is grains of powder]

Although cartridge names like 30-40 or 30-06 have a hyphen between two numerical values, they do not express a range of calibers (from diameter XX to diameter YY).

Do not convert these names made of numbers to metric units. Keep the name of the bullet STET, because they are known worldwide by that nomenclature.
Caliber of cannon

Historic English: 24-pounder cannon
100-pounder Parrott rifle
15-inch Rodman

Historic Spanish: Un cañón de á 24 (libras)
1500s–1890s

Not recommended: Un cañón Parrott de 45 kg

Recommended: Un cañón de 135 mm
Un cañón Rodman de 38 cm

Not recommended: Un cañón de á 18
Un cañón de á 100

Military history texts of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries name cannon using the archaic English term POUNDER. A 12-pounder is a cannon whose cannon ball weighed 12 pounds. To knowledgeable history buffs, this makes it possible to compare the bore diameters of different guns.

POUNDER is potentially confusing to modern readers. Many may assume that a 12-pounder cannon weighs 12 pounds.

Spanish artillerists of the 1500s to 1800s also used a pound-based cannon naming system, referencing the weight of the cannonball. But unlike the English POUNDER, the Spanish nomenclature usually did not include the word LIBRA (POUND). Surveys of visitors in forts reveal that today's Spanish-only readers don't often know what the unusual historic artillerists' phrase implies.

Naming a 200-year-old cannon in either Spanish or English by telling how many pounds the ball weighed is a problem — and all the more so for readers who come from metric countries. Few readers have any idea of how big a 6-pound cannonball is relative to a 24-pound cannon ball.

The better cannon naming system is based on the measurement of the bore diameter, expressed in cm or mm. This name system started gaining favor in the late 19th-century. After the United States' military went metric after World War II, it became the most widely used nomenclature for cannon, mortars, and howitzers. Expressing the bore diameter in centimeters is the easiest way to give Spanish readers an easily understood clue as to the relative size of the cannon projectile.
7.14
Caliber of rifles, shotguns, pistols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English today:</th>
<th>Historic Spanish:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A .75-caliber Brown Bess musket</td>
<td>Un fusil inglés de á 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A .69-caliber Spanish pistol</td>
<td>Una pistola española de á 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 20-gauge shotgun</td>
<td>Una escopeta de á 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un fusil de 19 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Una pistola de 17.5 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Una escopeta de calibre 20*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The best solution for correctly identifying rifles and pistols is to **state the bore diameter expressed in millimeters**.

Military history writers commonly refer to the size of rifles, muskets, and pistols by a decimal number below 1.0 followed by the word **CALIBER** — a .75 caliber musket, a .50 caliber pistol. This nomenclature tells readers the diameter of the bullet, measured in hundredths of inches. A bigger caliber number relates to a bigger, more powerful rifle or pistol.

Shotguns (in English) are named by a whole number followed by the word **GAUGE**. “Gauge” indicates the diameter of a barrel for what number of spherical lead balls can be made from a pound. A 12 gauge shotgun has a bore that would fit a large lead ball that weighs 1/12\(^\text{th}\) of a pound. A bigger number “gauge” is a smaller bore shotgun. A 24-gauge Indian trade gun of the 1700s has a much smaller bore (and therefore less power) than a 10-gauge shotgun today.

Shotguns in Spanish still follow this gauge naming system.

In the 1700–1800s, Spanish nomenclature for pistol and musket calibers followed the same name system still used today for shotgun gauge nomenclature in English. Only arms collectors or military historians will know this arcane nomenclature.

Using **millimeters is a sure bet** to let Spanish-only readers understand how big a gun is, and its comparative size to other weapons cited in your texts.
Cannon projectiles

Writers describing cannon ammunition of the 1600s–1800s often use a specialized vocabulary to deliver a flavor of the times. These terms are tough for non-military-background translators to render accurately.

BAR SHOT ~ palanqueta
CHAIN SHOT ~ balas encadenadas
GRAPESHOT, CANISTER SHOT ~ metralla
HOT SHOT ~ bala roja
ROUND SHOT, SOLID SHOT ~ bala rasa
SHELL ~ granada real
SPHERICAL CASE ~ granada de metralla

Source: Tratado de Artillería, Tomás de Morla, 1804.

Another resource for Spanish artillery technical terms:

700 Años de Artillería: Evolución histórica de los materiales de artillería y sus municiones
Por Coronel de Artillería Don Antonio de Sousa y Francisco;
Museo del Ejército, Madrid, España.

This resource showcases many of the engravings from Napoleonic era de Morla treatise as well as the correct vocabulary for cannon types, tools, munitions, and practices.

Chipmunk

Neotamias minimus

Recommended ARDILLA LISTADA
If informal, playful ARDILLITA
Recent Spanglish chichimoco, chimoco
Not recommended tamias

In many nature texts, English writers customarily make a distinction between “chipmunks and squirrels.” The Spanish-speaking world sees chipmunks as just a subset of squirrels, not something entirely different. So do zoologists.

Unless there is a pressing reason to call out some difference between chipmunks and other members of the greater squirrel family, use the generic noun ARDILLAS to cover both groups. This is both scientifically accurate and quicker to read and understand.

For English phrase …chipmunks and squirrels
Recommended LAS ARDILLAS
Not recommended las ardillas listadas y las ardillas
7.17 The Civil War

Recommended  la guerra civil estadounidense
Alternate  la Guerra de Secesión (1861–1865)

Military history writers in the United States are accustomed to writing about the Civil War (1861–1865) because this nation has only experienced one civil war, and their English-speaking audience won't be confused.

Spanish-speaking readers come from countries that have had more than one civil war. They may not immediately connect the phrase “THE CIVIL WAR” with the middle of the 19th century. Augment clarity by including the dates.

7.18 Continental Divide

Recommended  la divisoria continental
* in lower case
Alternate  la Gran Divisoria
Not recommended  la divisoria Continental
la divisoria Continental de aguas

Crossing the “Great Divide” has had an almost mythic power to many English writers working on topics of Western history. Reviewers in 2015 did not find it had the same punch for Spanish audiences. Treat as a normal noun.

7.19 Copperhead
Agkistrodon contortrix

Recommended  CANTIL COBRIZO
If space limited  víbora
Not recommended  cabeza de cobre

This small pit viper can be found in the USA, Mexico, and coastal Central America as far south as Costa Rica. On many webpages you can see its name incorrectly translated, an example of how often 21st-century translators are taking the shortcut of directly translating names of animals from English, regardless of how known or utterly unknown that resulting phrase may be to native speakers of Spanish.

See the discussion under 7.48 RATTLESNAKES. How relatively important is it to convey the idea that a snake is poisonous? Is getting the long-form nature guide name translated into words that are widely known and understood by first-language-Spanish speakers essential?
7.20
Coral snake
*Micrurus fulvius*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>SERPIENTE CORALILLO ARLEQUÍN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If space limited</td>
<td>coralillo, coral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If folkloric</td>
<td>palito de caramelo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not recommended</td>
<td>cobra americana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>serpiente de coral de Florida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>serpiente grano rojo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>serpiente de liga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This neurotoxic elapid is found both in the southern United States and northeastern Mexico. Mexican herpetologists list 14 other species of coral snake found in their republic. If scientific precision is required in your text, use the longer form of the Spanish common name because U.S. resident *Micrurus fulvius* is not the only coral snake out there.

7.21
Cottonmouth, Water Moccasin
*Agkistrodon piscivorus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>MOCASÍN NEGRA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If space limited</td>
<td>víbora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not recommended</td>
<td>mocosín de agua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>boca de algodón</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This pit viper is only found inside the United States, so it cannot be found named in scientific or governmental species lists in neighboring Spanish-speaking countries. See also 7.48 RATTLESNAKES below.

7.22
Critter & Creature

**CAVEAT**

Nature writers often use the English term CRITTER as a playful, lighthearted synonym for ANIMALS.

There is no good way to translate CRITTER into Spanish so that it carries the same positive, friendly-to-kids tone.

Some Spanish-English dictionaries translate CRITTER as BICHO. Avoid this word in NPS publications and exhibits.

Even the root word for CRITTER — CREATURE — is potentially problematic in Spanish. CRIATURA is not a value-neutral term; CRIATURA often implies a person who is the puppet or tool of a more powerful figure.

Some dictionaries translate CREATURES as ANIMALITOS.
But the word *Animal* in Spanish is not value neutral. *Animal* is sometimes used as a synonym for a violent brute or an uncultured person of low social status.

**Recommended:**  
**Don’t translate CRITTER.**  
Rework your Spanish texts. Use the actual species name instead.

### 7.21 Dumping station

**Recommended**  
*depósito de aguas negras*  
The expression *dump station*, seen often on maps for national park campgrounds, baffled a translator who was neither a camper, nor a first-language English speaker.

### 7.22 Euphemisms

Watch out for governmental euphemisms like “Comfort Stations” or “Special Use Permit.” Spot such phrases at the beginning of your translation project, and work out what these euphemisms actually mean to save time for translators and editors before text reviews.

### 7.25 Gadsden Purchase

In American texts:  
The Gadsden Purchase, 1853–54  
In Spanish:  
*la venta de La Mesilla*

History textbooks in the United States name this event by the principle American diplomat. Mexican sources refer instead to the name of the geographic region in southern Arizona that was sold.

### 7.26 Grand Canyon

**Recommended**  
*el gran cañón del Colorado*  
For label on a map  
GRAN CAÑÓN DEL COLORADO  
Not recommended  
*el Gran Cañón*  
*la Gran Barranca*

There is more than one large canyon in North America. The words *Gran Cañón* can be confused for a big cannon if the context is not clear. The correct Spanish geographical name is *el gran cañón del Colorado*. 
Gun parts

The right words in Spanish for triggers, hammers, springs, sears, touchholes, and frizzens are historic-era-sensitive. What you would call a trigger in a modern gun may not be right for a flintlock musket, or a percussion-cap-era pistol.

**FOR FLINTLOCKS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cock</td>
<td>pie de gato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flintlock (true)</td>
<td>llave francés</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frizzen</td>
<td>rastrillo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frizzen spring</td>
<td>muelle del rastrillo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Flint</td>
<td>perdernal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammer</td>
<td>pie de gato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lock</td>
<td>llave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main spring</td>
<td>muelle real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguelet Lock</td>
<td>llave española</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan</td>
<td>cazoleta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touchhole</td>
<td>oido</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigger</td>
<td>disparador</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FOR PERCUSSION-ERA AND MODERN GUNS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolt action</td>
<td>cerrojo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break action</td>
<td>basculante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caplock</td>
<td>llave de percusión</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cylinder (pistol)</td>
<td>barrilete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammer</td>
<td>percutor o martillo percutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main spring</td>
<td>resorte principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lever action</td>
<td>de palanca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over Under Action</td>
<td>de caños superpuestos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nipple &amp; Drum</td>
<td>chimenea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side by Side (Shotgun)</td>
<td>yuxtapuestos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigger</td>
<td>gatillo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.28
Guns, large and small
Caveat

Be aware that military writers often call cannon GUNS.

In most English-Spanish dictionaries, the first meaning given for GUN is PISTOLA. In general, the Spanish term ARMA is the best solution for a small hand-held pistol.

But if the English writer is speaking of artillery, use CAÑÓN.

Gunners in many NPS military history texts refer to men who serve on artillery crews, and should be translated into Spanish as ARTILLEROS.

7.29
Handicapped / Disabled
Caveat

Recommended LOS DISCAPACITADOS
Not recommended los des capacitados los disminuidos persona impedida
Alternate, gaining popularity in México: los minusválidos

7.30
Horseshoe crab
Limulus polyphemus

Recommended CANGREJO BAYONETA
Alternates cangrejo cacerola límulo xifosuro cacerolita del mar tanquecito de mar cucaracha marina
Not recommended cangrejo herradura (an Anglicism)

This species turned out to be a classic example of finding many common names in Spanish while looking for something better than a software-generated literal translation of its English common name.
7.31 Indians
CAVEAT

Recommended  los indígenas
Not recommended  los indios

Reviewers for early NPS Spanish translation projects revealed that the simple word INDIO has pejorative or negative connotations for some readers from some Spanish-speaking countries. Consider how emotionally loaded the words NEGRO, BLACK, and AFRICAN AMERICAN have been in the United States in the last 60 years.

7.32 Jargon: Avoid or Fix

Literal word-for-word translation of government jargon produces strange Spanish that is almost impenetrable to the average reader. This is often made worse by the multiple stacked modifiers so common in bureaucratic English.

Try to get to the essence of the thought, rather than its literal translation in Spanish. On maps, for example, the English word AREA is often superfluous. Delete it.

Figure out a way to give the thought correctly in Spanish in the fewest words possible without obfuscation.

Examples:

English jargon: Group Use Area
What it really means: Sitio para grupos

English jargon: Backcountry Camping Area
What it really means: Sitio remoto para acampar

English jargon: Personal Flotation Device (PFD)
What it really means: Chaleco salvavidas

English jargon: Personal Watercraft (PWC)
What it really means: Moto de agua

English jargon: Cooperative Use Area
What it really meant: Zona restringida
7.33
Memorial Day to Labor Day

The expression "Memorial Day to Labor Day" is American cultural shorthand for SUMMER. The English writer has assumed that every reader knows when the federal holidays are in the United States. But readers who do not live in the USA may have no clue when exactly these holidays fall, in the same way that US citizens don't always know all the Mexican national holidays, or all the Canadian holidays.

Recommended: VERANO
Not recommended: desde el Día de los Caídos hasta el Día de Trabajo

7.34
Use metric measurements

Trail and road distances are critical for visitors to understand so that they can make decisions about how best to enjoy their experiences in national parks.

The cleanest solution is the give miles/yards only in English, and kilometers/meters only in Spanish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended:</th>
<th>25 miles</th>
<th>40 kilómetros</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not recommended:</td>
<td>25 millas</td>
<td>40 kilómetros</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Putting both miles and kilometers in both languages creates visual clutter and eats up valuable space on maps.

Some NPS reviewers near the border with Mexico have argued the case that most of their Spanish-speaking visitors live in the United States and are therefore more familiar with feet, miles, and gallons over meters, kilometers, and liters. Hence there is little or no need to include metric units in publications or exhibits. No rigorous study has been done to prove that this opinion is true.

To provide solid information to international audiences, the effective solution is to include metric units that are easily understood all around the world.
Musket and Fusil

Recommended fusil
Not recommended mosquete

If the text speaks of a flintlock musket of the late-17\textsuperscript{th} century through the mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century, use FUSIL.

If you are referring to a MATCHLOCK MUSKET of the 1500s to the 1600s, then in Spanish use MOSQUETE.

MOSQUETE and FUSIL are not interchangeable. Present-day Spanish-English dictionaries often do not correctly understand the distinction of these two words. Rely on published period sources in Spanish, such as Tomás de Morla’s \textit{Tratado de Artillería}, an encyclopedia of cannon and illustrations of the standard military long guns and pistols. To impart the flavor of the 1500s–1700s, use the actual Spanish technical/military words of the time.

The Musket/Fusil confusion is made worse because both words exist in 17\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th}-century English, and are not used in English as they were in Spanish. A FUSIL in an 18\textsuperscript{th}-century English-speaking army was a lighter, smaller long arm carried by an officer. The common soldiers carried a MUSKET. A FUSIL in an 18\textsuperscript{th}-century Spanish-speaking army was the standard long gun carried by the common soldier in the ranks.

FUSIL continues to be the name for the standard soldier’s rifle in modern Spanish-speaking armies.

Names for Plants & Animals

Names vary greatly from country to country in Latin America and Spain. Sometimes you can find many as 20 different common names for a single animal. But for other plants or animals, no common name at all exists in Spanish.

CAVEAT

Many translators now use \texttt{ES.WIKIPEDIA.ORG} as an easy-to-go-to source for common plant or animal names in Spanish. This has \textbf{not proven to be dependable} data. Why not? Because if the \texttt{ES.WIKIPEDIA} article was first written in English, the text has usually been translated word-for-word by software, and not necessarily reviewed or edited afterward by native speakers of the Spanish language.

Park interpreters can shorten the time needed to get the right popular names in Spanish. Give the translator the \textbf{correct scientific name} for every plant or animal mentioned in the film or texts before they start. If the bilingual staff at a national park already has a common Spanish name they use when talking with visitors, list it.
When you find more than one Spanish common name…

Identify your most expected audience: Mexican-Americans, Cuban-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Central Americans, Spaniards, or a mixture of international visitors.

When in doubt, use the common name of the closest Spanish-speaking country to the national park. For Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, or California, use the Mexican common name. For Florida or other Gulf Coast states, use the Cuban, Dominican, or Puerto Rican common name.

If no Spanish name is found…

Use the scientific name by itself, with a preceding general noun to give Spanish-only readers a hint what it is you are talking about.

Examples: el molusco *Neverita duplicata*
la vieira *Argopecten gibbus*
el camarón *Tozeuma carolinense*
la víbora *Crotalus scutulatus*

Scientific names are not considered too highbrow in Latin America. In many national parks in the Spanish-speaking world, interpretive texts use the genus and species binomial in the place of local names, and readers expect to see it.

7.37 National Park Service

DO NOT TRANSLATE

Keep the names of all U.S. governmental organizations as they appear in English. Names of federal agencies, bureaus, departments, and offices are proper nouns.

Translators for the Columbus Quincentennial in the early 1990s hotly debated whether the National Park Service could best be translated as el *SERVICIO DE PARQUES NACIONALES* or el *SERVICIO NACIONAL DE PARQUES*. Is the NPS an agency that serves National Parks? Or is it a National Service of Parks?

English allows modifiers to be stacked, and nouns can be used as adjectives. Spanish requires the relationship between the noun and its modifiers to be less vague.
7.38
Nature-based collective nouns

Watch out for texts that explain zones of plant life that (in English) just using a plural noun for the principal plant in that life zone.

The PINES in English may mean both a plurality of trees, or it may mean a plant community. In Spanish two different words are needed to express these different ideas. Examples seen in NPS products reviewed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PINES</td>
<td>PINOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(many pine trees)</td>
<td>(pineland, pine grove)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANGROVE</td>
<td>MANGLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(many mangrove plants)</td>
<td>(a mangrove forest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHRB</td>
<td>MATAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(many shrubs, often dry)</td>
<td>(scrubland, thickets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSH</td>
<td>ARBUSTOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(many bushes)</td>
<td>(zone of bushes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EL MONTE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bush (wild country)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.39
Needles on conifers

Recommended  
Not recommended

Recommended
Not recommended

7.40
North on maps

Recommended  
Not recommended

The single letter “N” represents both the English word NORTH and the Spanish word NORTE with clarity. There is no need to clutter up a map with extra verbiage that does not add to meaning and slows down a reader.

The cardinal points of the compass rose are almost the same in both English and Spanish, so single-letter abbreviations work. Only West differs.

English compass rose  
Rosa de los vientos (español)
7.41
Oaks: Encinos vs. robles

Caveat

If deciduous  
robles
If an evergreen  
encino, encina

In Spanish the typical deciduous hardwood red oaks, white oaks, and black oaks seen in northern Europe and North America are known as ROBLES. This is the word you will most likely get back from translators (or software) that are not naturalists or botanists.

However, the evergreen live oaks of the Gulf Coast and California are not ROBLES. They are ENCINAS. Check a botany text or a reliable online resource like the Mexican federal government’s CONABIO Naturalista to find the right Spanish common name for your particular oak tree.

7.42
Panther or puma

Recommended  
PUMA
Alternates  
LEÓN DE LA SIERRA
Not recommended  
pantera

North America’s most widespread big cat, Felis concolor, has many common names in English: cougar, catamount, panther, mountain lion, painter, and puma.

In Spanish, most widely known name for this species—regardless of country—is PUMA. This short word helps safety signs visually get to the main idea quickly. PUMA also saves text line length in waysides and publications.

In 2006 first-language-Spanish-speaking reviewers from many different countries felt that the word PANTERA referred more to the Old World (African) Panthera leo.

Decades ago South Florida national parks chose to ignore the Spanish term PUMA. So today there are many existing materials, printed and on the Internet, calling the Florida panther ~ LA PANTERA DE LA FLORIDA.

For the sake of consistency, Everglades National Park chose to keep using LA PANTERA DE LA FLORIDA.

Big Cypress safety signs used the shorter term PUMA.
7.43
The Park v. PARQUE NACIONAL

CAVEAT

“The park” ≠ A NPS-MANAGED SITE

Recommended  el parque nacional
Not recommended  el parque

Writers often assume that readers understand the phrase ‘THE PARK’ is an acceptable substitute for their National Park, National Monument, National Seashore, etc. But translating ‘THE PARK’ directly into Spanish will NOT guarantee that Spanish-only readers will understand the national significance of the site.

In Spanish-speaking countries the word PARQUE by itself means a small downtown urban green space. The word PARQUE by itself does not mean a large natural or historic-cultural patrimony of national or international significance.

Use PARQUE NACIONAL to be clear and to impart more dignity and significance to your site.

7.44
Pinyon

CAVEAT

If Pinus edulis  PINO DULCE
If Pinus monophylla  PIÑÓN

Reviewers working on translated visitor center texts for Coronado National Memorial in 2015 were surprised to learn that not all pinyons have the same common name in Spanish.

Check trusted online biological references, like the Mexican federal government’s CONABIO Naturalista database.

Biologists call the PIÑÓN-JUNIPER life zone CEDRO-PINO in Spanish.
7.45
Place Names – Don’t Translate

CAVEAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Red Hills Visitor Center (STET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not recommended</td>
<td>Centro de visitantes de Colinas Coloradas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommended  White Sands National Monument
Not recommended  Monumento nacional de Arenas Blancas

Recommended  Blue Ridge Parkway
Not recommended  Autopista de la Serranía Azul

Keep the names of all places on maps in their original English — or Spanish — form, so that a reader can look from the text to a map or road guide sign and make an instant connection as they move through the national park and make decisions about where to go and how to spend their time.

Translating place names injects only confusion into a Spanish-only visitor’s experience. Especially on maps and orientation materials, keep all place names untranslated.

CAVEAT. Place names, like any proper names in Spanish, should not be divided at the end of a line of text.

7.46
Place Names that were originally Spanish:
STET

If a place or key feature in a national park has an attractive, unusual sounding Spanish-origin name, writers often use some space in the following English text to explain or define what that Spanish phrase means in English.

That gives you an opportunity to save some space in your Spanish text. It is completely unnecessary to explain what these original Spanish terms mean to native speakers of Spanish.

Some names that may sound appealing and exotic to English-only readers may be as mundane as “live oak tree” or “cow” to someone who understands Spanish.

Avoid confusing readers with tricky or nonsensical back translations from Spanish to English back to Spanish.
7.47 Park Ranger

Recommended  guardaparque
Alternate  guía de parque
Not recommended  guardabosque

The DRAE (Diccionario de Real Academia Española) does not yet officially list the word the NPS has long preferred for its rangers: GUARDAPARQUE.

Other Latin America national parks coined this word in contrast with GUARDABOSQUES, which is a forest ranger or often a game warden. Years ago, we adopted GUARDAPARQUE from these sister agencies.

CAVEAT. GUARDABOSQUES is often seen written in a plural form when it really means a singular noun. This has shown up in some draft Spanish translations of GUARDAPARQUE.

7.48 Rattlesnake

Crotalus spp.

Recommended  VÍBORA DE CASCABEL
Also acceptable  SERPIENTE DE CASCABEL
If scientific  crótalo
If space limited  víbora
If folkloric (RATTLER)  chilladora
If sidewinder  crótalo cornudo

Not recommended  cascabel

Translating RATTLESNAKES for NPS projects over the years has been challenging because many draft texts focus on the typical English-language biology book or nature guide long name forms, such as Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake, Western Diamondback Rattlesnake, or Timber Rattlesnake. Names like these in tone are not easily found or widely known in the Spanish-speaking world. If you translate this name form word-for-word, it won’t convey any extra value in meaning. It has the potential to baffle most readers.

The first question to ask is “what is the purpose of what we are writing?” If the most important idea is that the snake is poisonous and dangerous, use the short word VÍBORA.

If the purpose includes making a distinction between this particular rattlesnake and others, look for nature guides or species lists from Spanish-speaking countries to find the actual names for these rattlers that are known widely in Spanish. The agency CONABIO.gob, for example, lists 39 species of crotalids found south of the US-Mexico border.

If you can’t find a good, short version common name in Spanish, use la víbora Crotalus spp.
7.49
Rifles

Recommended  

Caution with:  

Military history sites need this word most. If the weapon in question is a standard military long arm carried by a foot soldier, **FUSIL** is the best Spanish term.

**CAVEAT!** Some large cannon in the mid-19th century had rifled barrels, and were commonly called **RIFLES**, e.g. the Parrott Rifle. Park interpreters should tell translators which rifles are *small arms* (single man carried) and which refer to *artillery* (crew served).

7.50
Ring of Fire

Recommended  

Not recommended  

Be wary of nicknames or phrases that have been used to popularize scientific ideas—like the volcanic **RING OF FIRE** around the Pacific Rim. These phrases may not be universal concepts. What English-speakers think of as a **RING** may look more like a **BELT** to another culture.

Confusion over what to call an idea, like this one, arises when English phrases are mechanically translated for new “bilingual” Internet web pages, without checking with a native speaker of Spanish to see if that new software-generated phrase is actually something people in the real Spanish-speaking world know and recognize.

An excellent resource for how to best translate geological terms into Spanish is this undergraduate-level textbook:

**FUNDAMENTOS DE GEOLOGÍA FÍSICA**, 1997

L. Don Leet & Sheldon Judson,  
EDITORIAL LIMUSA S.A. DE C.V. GRUPO NORIEGA EDITORES, MÉXICO, DF.  
TRANSLATORS/PROFESSIONAL GEOLOGICAL REVIEWERS IN MEXICO: ING. LUIS BENAVIDES GARCÍA & ING. GEÓLOGO EDUARDO J. GUZMÁN, UNAM.
7.51
Sawgrass
Cladium jamaicense

Recommended: **hierba serrucho**
Not recommended: **hierba serrada, cortadera, sibal**

SAWGRASS proved to be one of the biggest translation challenges for Everglades NP in 2003.

SAWGRASS is used as a noun and also frequently as an evocative descriptor of the vast watery prairies. Many nature writers think that the word SAWGRASS delivers a distinctive flavor of South Florida.

After much debate, the park’s bilingual staff concluded there was no common name for SAWGRASS in Spanish that was used by most of the Spanish-speaking naturalists working in South Florida. No one in 2003 could find *Cladium jamaicense* in a published Spanish dictionary or biology textbook. A similar sharp-sided sedge in Argentina is **CORTADERA**. A Google search in Spanish only revealed that the same species *Cladium jamaicense* is known in coastal Mexico and Guatemala as **SIBAL**. But the word **SIBAL** drew blank looks from all bilingual NPS reviewers.

The 2003 solution for what to call SAWGRASS was a made-up compound of two Spanish nouns. This choice followed the pattern seen in Audubon Society publications and other nature field guides when common names for birds have been made-up for Spanish where an English common name existed but a Spanish common name did not.

**Hierba serrucho** will not deliver the same specific-to-South-Florida meaning and poetic associations as the English word SAWGRASS. Editors of the translated Spanish materials need to make sure that final version does not lean too heavily on any newly coined word to carry the heart of the message to visitors.

7.52
Scorpion

Recommended: **alacrán, alacranes**
If very large: **escorpión, escorpiones**

Use **ALACRÁN** for safety messages when referring to the most typical small and medium-size scorpions of the warmer regions of the United States or northern Mexico.

The term **ESCORPIÓN** is more common in Spain than in the New World. In Mexico, it is used mostly with only the largest of scorpions. **ESCORPIÓN** is the common product of software translations from English to Spanish in the USA.
Writers employ the exotic names of long-ago ships to give a historic flavor. Strive to match this in correct nautical Spanish. As is true in English, names for ships in maritime Spanish are historic-era-sensitive.

**Ship names**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOR SAILING SHIPS</th>
<th>(listed in alphabetical order)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BARKENTINE</td>
<td>~ bergantín-goleta 1800s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARQUE / BARK</td>
<td>~ bricbarca 1800s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOAT</td>
<td>~ barco, embarcación</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIGANTINE</td>
<td>~ bergantín 1700-1800s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARAVEL</td>
<td>~ carabela 1450-1600s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARRACK</td>
<td>~ carraca 1450-1600s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIPPER SHIP</td>
<td>~ clíper 1800s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORVETTE</td>
<td>~ corbeta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUTTER</td>
<td>~ patrullera, cúter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLUYT</td>
<td>~ filibote 1600-1700s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRIGATE</td>
<td>~ fragata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FULL-RIGGED SHIP</td>
<td>~ velero con aparejo de cruz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALIOT</td>
<td>~ galeota 1450-1600s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALLEASS</td>
<td>~ galeza 1450-1600s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALLEY</td>
<td>~ galera 1450-1600s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALLEON</td>
<td>~ galeón 1500-1600s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIG, ADMIRAL’S</td>
<td>~ esquife, bote (para oficiales)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERMAPHRODITE BRIG</td>
<td>~ bergantín 1700-1800s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOLLY BOAT</td>
<td>~ serení 1600-1900s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LONG BOAT</td>
<td>~ chalupa, lancha, canoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUGGER</td>
<td>~ barcolongo 1600-1900s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KETCH</td>
<td>~ queche 1600-2000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAN-O-WAR</td>
<td>~ buque de guerra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACKET BOAT</td>
<td>~ paquebote 1600-1700s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PINNACE</td>
<td>~ pinaza 1600-1700s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PILOT BOAT</td>
<td>~ pailebot 1600-2000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIRATE SHIP</td>
<td>~ corsario 1500-2000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOONER</td>
<td>~ goleta 1600-1900s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLAVER</td>
<td>~ barco negrero 1600-1900s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQUARE RIGGED</td>
<td>~ con vela cuadrada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHIP</td>
<td>~ navío, buque, bajel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHIP-OF-THE-LINE</td>
<td>navío de línea 1600-1700s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLOOP</td>
<td>balandra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TALL SHIP</td>
<td>fragata 1900s–2000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YAWL</td>
<td>yola</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FOR MODERN SHIPS** (listed in alphabetical order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIRCRAFT CARRIER</th>
<th>portaaivones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BATTLESHIP</td>
<td>acorazado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARGO SHIP</td>
<td>buque de carga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRUISER</td>
<td>crucero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLAGSHIP</td>
<td>buque insignia, nave capitana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUIDED MISSILE CRUISER</td>
<td>crucero lanzamisiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUNBOAT</td>
<td>cañonero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP, HORSEPOWER</td>
<td>CV, caballos de vapor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRONCLAD (SHIP)</td>
<td>barco blindado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIGHTER</td>
<td>barcaza, gabarra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINESWEEPER</td>
<td>dragaminas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADDLE WHEELER</td>
<td>vapor de ruedas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDE-WHEELER</td>
<td>vapor de ruedas laterales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEAMER</td>
<td>vapor, piróscafo, buque de vapor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TORPEDO BOAT</td>
<td>torpedero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAMP STEAMER</td>
<td>vapor volandero, carguero</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Useful Glossaries of Nautical Terms in Spanish:**

http://candamo.eu/Naval/miscelan/marco.htm
http://www.libreriadenautica.com/diccionario_nautico.html

7.54  
**Sounds, Lagoons, and Bays**

Translators working for Gulf Islands National Seashore in 2009 struggled to find a good rendering for the MISSISSIPPI SOUND. Maps and geography text books published in Spanish provided the solution.

Bodies of saltwater that are called SOUNDS or BAYS in English may be known in Spanish as LAGUNAS (lagoons).

Both Texas and North Carolina have barrier islands with large tidal bodies of water behind them. In North Carolina, it's called Albemarle SOUND. In Texas, the same kind of body of water is called La LAGUNA MADRE.

7.55  
**The American Southwest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAVEAT</th>
<th>Not recommended</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>el suroeste americano</em></td>
<td><em>Arizona, Nuevo México, Texas</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>northern Mexico and the American Southwest el norte de México y el suroeste americano</em></td>
<td><em>Arizona, Sonora, Nuevo México, Chihuahua, Texas, Coahuila y las Californias</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A review team looking over newly translated museum text for Coronado National Memorial in 2015 gave their consensus that repeatedly referring to the region where the 1540 Coronado Expedition traveled as “NORTHERN MEXICO AND THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST” was Anglo-centric—and clumsy to read in both English and Spanish.

Naming the states, both north and south of the International Boundary, is the most neutral and even-handed way to identify this region. Don’t forget that there are two Californias if your view doesn’t stop at the border.

From the viewpoint of visitors from the East Coast or Midwest, southern Arizona is “the Southwest.” But any NPS unit near the border may have many visitors from Mexico who consider Arizona, New Mexico, or Texas as just being “the North.” And this region was not the American Southwest until the war between the United States and Mexico ended in 1848.
### 7.56 
**Straws (for drinking)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>popote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If for Puerto Ricans</td>
<td>sorbeto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If for Cubans</td>
<td>pitillo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If for Argentines</td>
<td>bombilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also acceptable</td>
<td>pajita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not recommended</td>
<td>popote-de-soda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although English writers often modify STRAW with the preceding adjective SODA to make it distinctive from STRAW as the agricultural product, this extra word is not needed in Spanish translation. Any of the single words listed above are sufficient to give readers the right meaning.

Adding **DE SODA** to **POPOTE** is unnecessarily redundant, like saying “Triple AAA” or “for all intents and purposes” in English prose.

### 7.57 
**Swamps, Marshes, and Wetlands**

| Recommended | HUMEDALES for WETLANDS  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MARJALES</td>
<td>for SALTWATER MARSHES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caution:</th>
<th>PANTANO, CIÉNAGA are freshwater, and may be considered negative words by some readers.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MARISMA</strong> is also saltwater marsh.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National parks with important wetlands have found out there are strong debates about what words in Spanish can be best used to put wetlands in a positive, not negative light.

See the discussion below about WILDERNESS.

### 7.58 
**Tejas vs. Texas**

If before independence in 1836  
If after 1836

| TEJAS | TEXAS |

Use the historic place name spelling **TEJAS** for periods when this region was a province of Mexico or New Spain.
7.59
Trailhead

Many National Park Service writers employ this word assuming that it is universally understood. It is not.

So far, we have found no short, one-word equivalent in Spanish that is widely understood.

Recommended

PUNTO DE PARTIDO
INICIO DEL SENDERO
INICIO DEL RECORRIDO

If any important aspect of the message is that there is PARKING for hikers or horseback riders available at the TRAILHEAD, use ESTACIONAMIENTO to clarify what visitors need most.

Example:

ESTACIONAMIENTO DE TRANSPORTADORES DE CABALLOS

7.60
Trains

Spanish has a cognate word TREN — for a railroad train.

But TRAINS in some National Park Service 19th-century military history texts do not always refer to railroads. Examples are WAGON TRAINS or LOGISTICAL TRAINS or SUPPLY TRAINS. These words require extra attention to translate in a way that Spanish general readers who are not historians can understand.

7.61
The United States

Write out the entire formal name of our country.

Recommended

Estados Unidos de América

If space limited

EE.UU.

EUA

Not recommended

Estados Unidos

Many countries in the world have or have had a name that includes “United States”— Belgium, Brazil, Central America, Colombia, Indonesia, Mexico, and Venezuela.

The formal name for the nation that lies south of our border is ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS. Mexico’s alternate less formal name is REPÚBLICA MEXICANA.

A short, less formal Spanish name for the USA used in Mexico and South America is la unión americana.
Vault toilets

Recommended  
letrina

Acceptable, but not as clear  
servicio sanitario

Not recommended  
baño

The NPS uses the termsVault toilet and pit toilet for backcountry sanitary facilities that do not flush.

Reviewers working on texts for White Sands in 2013 discovered that for many first-language-Spanish readers, the term BAÑO implies that this is a bathroom where water is provided, hands can be washed, and flushing will occur.

If that is not the case in your backcountry site, useLETRINA.

Wagons

Recommended  
carro  
carrromato  
carreta  
for COVERED WAGON  
for 2-WHEEL CART

Not recommended  
vagón

VAGÓN looks like it should be the cognate for the English word WAGON. Be aware that VAGÓN refers to railroad cars—which the British in the 1800s also call wagons.

There are many specific names in Spanish for horse-drawn or oxen-drawn cargo vehicles, just as in English before the days of the internal combustion engine writers used wagon, cart, dray, tumbrel, truck, etc. Find the right word for the historic period.

Walls

Walls of a fortified city or a fortress are calledMURALLAS in Spanish. There is no exact English cognate for this term.

The standard word for a wall of a building —PARED— is not the right word to use for a fortress or castle.
7.65 Names of wars

Direct translations of the customary names known widely in the United States may not be the name that Spanish-only readers know for many wars. Examples where the name known to Spanish-speaking audiences differs from the best-known English war name are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Spanish Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King William's War</td>
<td>1689–1697</td>
<td>Guerra de los Nueve Años</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Anne's War</td>
<td>1702–1713</td>
<td>Guerra de la Sucesión Española</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War of Jenkin's Ear</td>
<td>1740–1748</td>
<td>Guerra de Sucesión Austriaca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French &amp; Indian War</td>
<td>1754–1763</td>
<td>Guerra de los Siete Años</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Revolution</td>
<td>1776–1783</td>
<td>Guerra de Independencia de Estados Unidos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War of 1812</td>
<td>1812–1815</td>
<td>Guerra anglo-estadounidense de 1812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican-American War</td>
<td>1846–1848</td>
<td>Guerra del 47 (in Mexico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-American War</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Guerra de 1898 (in Puerto Rico, Cuba)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guerra Hispanoamericana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>El desastre de 98, Guerra de Cuba (in Spain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Punitive Expedition</td>
<td>1916–1917</td>
<td>3ª Intervención estadounidense en México</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mexican Expedition</td>
<td></td>
<td>(official US name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War I, Great War</td>
<td>1914–1918</td>
<td>Primera Guerra Mundial, Gran Guerra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWI</td>
<td></td>
<td>PGM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II</td>
<td>1939–1945</td>
<td>Segunda Guerra Mundial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWII</td>
<td></td>
<td>SGM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.66 Whites, white settlers

CAVEAT

A direct translation of WHITES as BLANCOS, like the term INDIOS, may have negative connotations linking back to the colonial past and its criollo and peninsular elites. For interpretive texts written for the National Park Service, always look for other, less offensive ways to express this idea.

The best solution may be to edit or rewrite the passage. Sometimes using the term ANGLOSAJONES works.

For the Whitman Mission Spanish park brochure, we opted to use SETTLERS: POBLADORES / COLONOS instead.
Conservationists today often assume the concept of **WILDERNESS** is something that is universally seen as positive and wonderful. This point of view has turned out to be a cultural, linguistic minefield in Spanish translations.

Unfortunately, the standard Spanish words normally used for a **WILDERNESS** — **DESIERTO, SELVA, TIERRA SALVAJE** — are not positive, but heavily negative.

Recommended: *tierras silvestres, zona silvestre*
Alternate: *tierras indomadas*

Up until the 1800s, even English-language writers saw **WILDERNESS** as something to fear, to conquer, and to obliterate — not something positive or wonderful.

When you search in a Spanish-language thesaurus for how to say **WILDERNESS**, you find many negative connotations.

*ABANDONADO*  *DESHABITADO*  *SOLITARIO*
*DESPoblADO*  *VACIO*  *INHOSPITALARIO*
*SOLEDAD**  *INEXPLORADO*  *SOLEDUMBRE*

The whole idea that there is a legal classification of land use in the USA that we label **WILDERNESS** is puzzling to many Spanish readers.

Putting **WILDERNESS AREA** on a map in Spanish and expecting people to "get it" the way National Park Service employees understand that label (as a special-laws-apply area) won't work. Literal translation would give you something very similar to those very old maps that have “UNEXPLORED AREA” in the big blank spots in the middle of Africa and Australia.

In 2006 Sequoia–Kings Canyon’s staff strongly felt that **INDOMADO** was the best rendering for **WILDERNESS**. The Spanish verb **DOMAR** means “to break a horse” and is fairly common in Latin America. Others in the Department of the Interior felt this word would draw blank stares from most Latin American readers.

Although Mexico established their first legal wilderness area and called it **tierra silvestre** in 2006, this term does not carry exactly the same meaning in Spanish as **WILD** has in English.

**SILVESTRE** also means **SAVAGE, RUSTIC, UNCULTURED, UNREFINED, CRUDE, BARBARIC, and PEASANT**.
7.68
Yucca

If a desert plant
  cortadillo  Yucca elata
  palmilla  Yucca torreyi
  palma criolla  Yucca periculosa
  izote

If a tropical tuber
  yuca, mandioca  Manihot esculenta

Dictionaries and translation software will point translators to the word YUCA first. Unless you mean the tropical plant with edible roots, look further to get the correct Spanish common name. A good online reference is the Mexican federal government’s CONABIO site called Naturalista.

7.69
Wildlife versus Plants and Animals

Recommended  flora y fauna  for WILDLIFE
Alternate  vida silvestre

Although it is acceptable and common to write “plants and animals” in English with no articles, this is usually translated into Spanish with the two articles: LAS PLANTAS Y LOS ANIMALES.

This choice produces a text line that increases from 18 to 25 spaces. If you use the standard Spanish phrase FLORA Y FAUNA you will save valuable space.

The terms FLORA Y FAUNA are not perceived to be as high vocabulary in Spanish, even though using their English cognates FLORA AND FAUNA seems high fallutin for general readers in today’s English. You can find FLORA Y FAUNA widely used in many Latin American national parks.

7.70
Zone vs. Area

The long debate about how to label wilderness "areas" in text and maps revealed that first-language-Spanish readers saw a clear distinction between ZONA and AREA.

**ZONA** was perceived to be a more managed, controlled place.

**ÁREA** was perceived to be a more general concept.

If the point of your text is that wilderness has to be protected and managed to survive in today’s world, use ZONA. If you are referring to a large area that is more loosely controlled, use ÁREA.
SECTION 8: WRITING & SYNTAX SUGGESTIONS

8.01 Adjectives: variety needed

When an English noun functions as an adjective, or makes a compound noun, it usually makes texts longer in Spanish—and often makes them less interesting to read.

Examples: DESERT TREES árboles del desierto DESERT PLAINS planicies del desierto

Here 12 letter spaces in English became 20 letter spaces in Spanish (160%). Publications and outdoor exhibits have limited space, and trimming text down to fit is challenging.

Look for other adjective forms, such as DESÉRTICO.

Editors and reviewers should ask themselves how many times a noun modifiers like DESERT or MOUNTAIN or RANGE need to appear in a text to get key thoughts conveyed. Save space and promote adjective variety.

8.02 Place-name-based adjectives in Spanish

Gentilicios

Give readers some variety by not repeating the formula (LAND FORM NOUN) DE (PLACE NAME) over and over. Most places have adjectives of locality, gentilicios, in Spanish.

English place name: SONORAN DESERT
Standard translation: desierto de Sonora
Gentilic alternate: desierto sonorense

English place name: PUERTO RICAN RAINFOREST
Standard translation: bosque pluvial de Puerto Rico
Gentilic alternate: bosque pluvial boricua

The adjective of locality is always lowercase in Spanish.

8.03 Multiple (stacked) modifiers

Interpretive writing in English abounds in noun series like DESERT PLAINS, FOOTHILLS, AND MOUNTAINS. Series like these produce very long and involved sentences in Spanish. Does DESERT modify just PLAINS or does it modify all three nouns? English syntax makes it possible to compress expressions that require more words in Spanish.
When trimming translated text to fit a space, the writer/editor and translator should watch out for rhetorical expressions and nouns in series that are mostly included for rhythm in English. Phrases like MOUNTAINS, DESERTS, AND PLAINS or BREAD AND BUTTER may read well in the original English, but they may not necessarily be the heart of the story to tell.

Some years ago, for the Saguaro brochure, keeping the single word SWEET in front of NECTAR cost a full additional line of text space in the new Spanish text. Since nectar is by its nature sweet, SWEET was trimmed out to save space.

8.04 Wordplay-based Interpretation

In some new museum labels written for Gulf Islands in 2009, the whole effectiveness of the thought hinged on being able to understand a play on words of the English name for a seashell or animal.

But the Spanish names for some of these creatures were nothing like the English names. In some cases, there was no Spanish common name. And there was not extra space available to explain at length in Spanish what the English name meant.

The best solution for this situation is to find an interesting angle or story to tell in Spanish about the creature that does not depend on wordplay with its name(s). Early in museum projects, writers should be cautioned to not write labels this way.

8.05 Use verbs instead of nouns

English relies heavily on nouns for key meanings. In contrast, texts originally written in Spanish often load more meaning and functions on the verbs.

A very literal translation often retains the English emphasis on the noun.

This is especially true in passive or transitive voice English sentences.

Invest time and thought to find Spanish verbs for text that is more natural to read and more effective in conveying key thoughts.
8.06  
Vocabulary — Is it too high?

Latin or Greek-based words that sound too scientific or too professorial in English can be normal vocabulary in a Latin-based language like Spanish.

Because Spanish and English share so many close cognates, reviewers who are bilingual may think some Spanish texts look too complex for a general audience. High-level-vocabulary words are reader roadblocks for many general readers in English.

A real-life example came up during a review for Spanish materials prepared for a national park where reviewers asked that DEL ESTE and DEL OESTE replace ORIENTAL and OCCIDENTAL. Occidental sounds professorial in English, but not in Spanish.

Know your target audience, both in Spanish and in English, and adjust the vocabulary level of translations to serve them.

8.07  
Avoid back-translations

Finding great quotes from people of the past can really make an exhibit or wayside panel better. In some cases, park interpreters know of a historical-era quote, originally written in Spanish, that has survived in standard textbooks, park study resources, or learned papers, but only in a modern English translation.

It is a mistake to re-translate a thought that was originally expressed in Spanish many years ago. Going from Spanish into English and then back to Spanish usually ends up with thoughts garbled and not close to their true form.

Take the extra effort to **hunt down what was the exact wording** of the original quote in **Spanish**.

Then make sure that the English version you started the exhibit planning with is an accurate rendering of the thoughts. It doesn’t matter that the grammar or spelling of a historic quote in Spanish may now seem quaint or archaic — that can add flavor to the interpretive impact.

For a San Antonio Missions project in 1999, it turned out that the original Spanish texts from an 18th-century traveler were far more interesting and revealing than how certain quotes had been customarily rendered for Texas textbooks in English.

For a Coronado visitor center project in 2015, it again turned out that the original Spanish chroniclers’ descriptions of their experiences from 1540 had more life and energy than the how they were translated and passed along in English textbooks.
SECTION 9: **WORD DIVISION CAVEATS**

NPS publications, exhibits, and waysides follow the international rules of word division for Spanish which you can find in English in the CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE, Sections 9.68 through 9.79.

9.01 **Spanish double letters**

When you divide a Spanish word into syllables for the end of a text line, don’t rely on your computer to automatically do it right.

Keep the digraphs (two-letter unique sound combinations) RR, CH, LL, QU, and GU together in the same syllable. This is parallel to English digraphs like CH, GH, RH, WH, WR, and TH. These two-letter combos have to remain together for correct syllable separation.

Examples:
- ci-ga-RRo
- mo-CHi-la
- ca-ba-LLe-ro
- hi-GUe-ra
- ar-QUi-tec-tu-ra

Before widespread computerization, databases, and the rise of the Internet, the formal Spanish rules of spelling and alphabetization in dictionaries and encyclopedias considered the three digraphs CH, LL, and RR to each be a single letter. This was changed by worldwide reforms in 1994, but you may still find a 30-letter-alphabetic system in indexes in older Spanish books.

9.02 **Safeguard key words during text adjustments**

Complex words, unusual words, and words that are critical to the meaning of the sentence should not be divided at the end of the line of text, if at all possible.

9.03 **Proper names – don’t divide at line ends**

Names of people in Spanish are not supposed to be divided by a line break, if there is any way to possibly avoid it.

This differs from English editing practices.
For further information, or to add items to this ongoing list of Spanish translation challenges and solutions, contact:

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NATIONAL PARK UNITS WHERE THIS SPANISH STYLE GUIDE HAS BEEN USED

Spanish translations of park brochures and other publications:

- Biscayne NP, Florida
- Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida
- Castillo de San Marcos NM, Florida
- Chamizal NM, Texas
- Chattahoochee River NRA, Georgia
- Dry Tortugas NP, Florida
- Everglades NP, Florida
- National Capital Region, DC-MD-VA
- Oklahoma City NM, Oklahoma
- Pinnacles NM, California
- Saguaro NP, Arizona
- San Juan NHS, Puerto Rico
- White Sands NM, New Mexico
- Whitman Mission NHS, Washington

Spanish translations of film scripts, subtitles, and audio description scripts:

- Cabrillo NM, California
- Carlsbad Caverns NP, New Mexico
- Castillo de San Marcos NM, Florida
- Channel Islands NP, California
- Mount Rushmore NM, South Dakota
- Palo Alto National Battlefield NHP, Texas
- San Antonio Missions NHP, Texas
- San Juan NHS, Puerto Rico
- White Sands NM, New Mexico
- Whitman Mission NHS, Washington

Spanish translations of wayside exhibits, visitor center exhibits, and safety signs:

- Big Bend NP, Texas
- Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida
- Biscayne NP, Florida
- Cabrillo NM, California
- Carlsbad Caverns NP, New Mexico
- Castillo de San Marcos NM, Florida
- Climate Change waysides, servicewide
- Coronado NM, New Mexico
- Delaware Water Gap, New Jersey
- Dry Tortugas NP, Florida
- Everglades NP, Florida
- Fort Washington Park, Maryland
- Grand Canyon NP, Arizona
- Guadalupe Mountains NP, Texas
- Gulf Islands NS, Florida/Mississippi
- Indiana Dunes NL, Indiana
- Joshua Tree NP, California
- Juan Bautista de Anza Trail, California
- Organ Pipe NM, Arizona
- Padre Island NS, Texas
- Palo Alto National Battlefield NHP, Texas
- Saguaro NP, Arizona
- Salinas Pueblo Missions NM, New Mexico
- San Antonio Missions NHP, Texas
- San Juan NHS, Puerto Rico
- Sequoia-Kings Canyon NP, California
- Timpanogos Cave NM, Utah
- White Sands NM, New Mexico