

## Cheat Sheet – Essential Skill #2: Effective Note-taking

### Keys to good notes:

- Ensure they are **Neat, Complete, and Accurate**
- Always assume you will not remember the details or that a stranger will be looking at your notes, not you. Could you understand your notes tomorrow? In five years time? Could someone who was not in the field understand your notes?

### To take good notes:

- Slow down and take your time to do it neatly, completely, and accurately
- Use the journalist's 6 Ws (**Who, What, When, Where, Why, How**) to ensure completeness of notes.
- Record time of day throughout your notes to act as signposts of your day
- Leave space between individual blocks of notes for readability
- Include notes to yourself
- For values less than 1.0 include a zero before the decimal (e.g., 0.2; 0.61; 0.957, etc.)
- Be careful of codes – be sure that you know them without mistake (100% certainty) or have a code cheat sheet with you. Recording incorrect codes is beyond a mistake – it is misleading and could lead to poor decisions being made.
- Use the four components of weather when recording your weather
  - Air temperature
  - Precipitation
  - Cloud cover
  - Wind (direction and speed)

### Photo-documentation

- Know why you are photographing something – what specifically are you trying to show the viewer?
- Watch for shadows interfering with a clear image, or bright light resulting in lack of contrast
- Take multiple photographs from a variety of angles to account for sun glare and shadows
- Include a physical scale in photograph so size of object can be determined
- Use a variety of image scales (e.g., close up, distant, in between) as required to clearly show both the context and the details of what you are trying to show.
- Download and backup photographs frequently for data security
- Record the photograph number in your notes and what or why you were taking the photograph