

# Collecting Specimens for the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County's Marine Biodiversity Center and Diversity Initiative for the Southern California Ocean

## Specimen/tissue preservation

**For molecular-grade specimens, it is important that tissues be preserved in high-quality 95% ethanol as soon as possible.** Do not use denatured alcohol or isopropyl alcohol. The containers we are giving you are filled with 95% ethanol. Do not dilute with water.

**Keep at least a 3:1 ratio of ethanol:tissue.** The ethanol will dehydrate specimens, diluting the alcohol, so it is important to keep a high ratio of alcohol to animal tissue.

In general, you can put multiple specimens from a single collecting event into one container (bearing in mind the ethanol:tissue ratio above).

There are a few exceptional taxa that should be kept separate because their chemistry may affect other specimens: sponges, tunicates, and the brown algal genus *Desmarestia*.

## Labels and label data

**Put labels directly into the containers with the specimens** (do not try to tape, stick, or rubber-band labels to the outside of containers or to lids).

The following label information is essential:

**Collection date**  
**Locality**  
**Latitude & longitude**  
**Collector name(s)**

The following information is useful (when applicable):

Specimen number (use your own scheme)  
Depth (or altitude)  
Habitat description  
Collecting method  
Species name (or higher-order taxonomy)

If you have many specimens, use the data spreadsheet we make available at:

<https://research.nhm.org/disco/protocols/data.html>

**Use the label paper we provide** for making specimen labels: it is cotton rag paper that can be immersed in alcohol or water.

**Write on label paper with either a pencil or an archival quality pen** (Pigma Micron). Regular pens and other markers wash off in alcohol.

## Specimen photographs

**We encourage collecting photographs** of specimens when they are alive, and photographs of the collecting locality. We will keep them in the specimen database along with other specimen metadata.

So that we can associate the photographs with the correct specimen, you will need to **put the photographed specimen in a separate container with its own label and specimen number.** Use any convenient specimen numbering scheme with photographed specimens (you can just use specimen #1, #2, etc.).

**Take one photograph that includes the specimen with its label**, so that we can correctly associate photos and specimens.

## Contact information

If you have questions, or to arrange for specimen delivery or pickup, please contact us:

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