

Writing Numbers

Rule 1

Spell out single-digit whole numbers. Use numerals for numbers greater than *nine*.

Examples:

I want five copies.

I want 10 copies.

Rule 2

Be consistent within a category. For example, if you choose numerals because one of the numbers is greater than *nine*, use numerals for all numbers in that category. If you choose to spell out numbers because one of the numbers is a single digit, spell out all numbers in that category.

If you have numbers in different categories, use numerals for one category and spell out the other.

Correct:

My 10 cats fought with their 2 cats.

My ten cats fought with their two cats.

Given the budget constraints, if all 30 history students attend the four plays, then the 7 math students will be able to attend only two plays. (Students are represented with figures; plays are represented with words.)

Incorrect:

I asked for five pencils, not 50.

Rule 3

Always spell out simple fractions and use hyphens with them.

Examples:

One-half of the pies have been eaten.

A two-thirds majority is required for that bill to pass in Congress.

Rule 4

A mixed fraction can be expressed in figures unless it is the first word of a sentence.

Examples:

We expect a 5 1/2 percent wage increase.

Five and one-half percent was the maximum allowable interest.

Rule 5

The simplest way to express large numbers is best. Round numbers are usually spelled out. Be careful to be consistent within a sentence.

Correct:

You can earn from one million to five million dollars.

Incorrect:

You can earn from one million to \$5,000,000.

Correct:

You can earn from five hundred to five million dollars.

You can earn from \$5 hundred to \$5 million.

Incorrect:

You can earn from \$500 to \$5 million.

You can earn from \$500 to five million dollars.

Rule 6

Write decimals in figures. Put a zero in front of a decimal unless the decimal itself begins with a zero.

Examples:

The plant grew 0.79 of a foot in one year.

The plant grew only .07 of a foot this year because of the drought.

Rule 7

With numbers of four or more digits, use commas. Count three spaces to the left of the ones column to place the first comma. If the number contains seven or more digits, continue placing commas after every three places.

Examples:

\$1,054.21

2,417,592

Rule 8

The following examples apply when using dates:

Examples:

The meeting is scheduled for June 30.

The meeting is scheduled for the 30th of June.

We have had tricks played on us on April 1.

The 1st of April puts some people on edge.

Rule 9

When expressing decades, you may spell them out and lowercase them.

Example:

During the eighties and nineties, the U.S. economy grew.

Rule 10

If you wish to express decades using incomplete numerals, put an apostrophe before the incomplete numeral but not between the year and the *s*.

Correct:

During the '80s and '90s, the U.S. economy grew.

Incorrect:

During the '80's and '90's, the U.S. economy grew.

Rule 11

You may also express decades in complete numerals. Again, don't use an apostrophe between the year and the *s*.

Example:

During the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. economy grew.

Rule 12

Normally, spell out the time of day in text even with half and quarter hours. With *o'clock*, the number is always spelled out.

Examples:

She gets up at four thirty before the baby wakes up.

The baby wakes up at five o'clock in the morning.

Rule 13

Use numerals with the time of day when exact times are being emphasized or when using A.M. or P.M.

Examples:

Monib's flight leaves at 6:22 A.M.

Please arrive by 12:30 sharp.

She had a 7:00 P.M. deadline.

Rule 14

Use *noon* and *midnight* rather than 12:00 P.M. and 12:00 A.M.

Rule 15

Hyphenate all compound numbers from *twenty-one* through *ninety-nine*.

Examples:

Forty-three persons were injured in the train wreck.

Twenty-three of them were hospitalized.

Rule 16

Write out a number if it begins a sentence.