

15 Numbers

HOW TO WRITE NUMBERS

• In general, write out any numbers that take no more than two words:

(1) twelve children; in forty-five minutes; six thousand dollars; one-half the voters

(2) 4,382 students; in 256 years; \$44.59; 15¼ seconds.

Hint: Not everyone agrees absolutely on correct use of numbers. In letters and other business writing, for example, the numbers one through ten are written out; numbers above ten usually take figures.

• Also, remember to use a hyphen with compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine and with fractions that describe: twenty-two representatives, a two-thirds majority in the Senate.

• If the first word in a sentence is a number, spell it out or rewrite the sentence.

Incorrect: 250 people marched on the mayor's office.

Correct: Two-hundred-and-fifty people marched on the mayor's office. **Correct:** There were 250 people who marched on the mayor's office.

• In a series of numbers, be consistent in style, even if some numbers seem to require figures and others seem to require words: (1) three cats, two dogs, and eleven canaries, (2) 14 magazines, 360 newspapers, 101 textbooks.

• Large figures like millions and billions, if in round numbers, may be expressed by the word *million* after the number. Use figures only if you want to illustrate the size of the number: 40 million (or 40,000,000); 3 billion (or 3,000,000,000).

Hint: Numbers like 43,255,000 must be written as numbers. The word *million* can only be used for even millions plus a simple fraction or decimal: 3½ million, 1.5 billion.

• In spelling out large round numbers, use the shortest possible form: Fourteen hundred (not one thousand four hundred).

• Use numbers for percents and decimals: 15.8 percent or 15.8%; .72 inches.

• Use numbers in full dates: April 7, 1980 (not April 7th, 1980).

• Use numbers to tell time if a.m. or p.m. follows. Spell out time for other uses (like o'clock, in the morning, etc.): 4:00 p.m., 8:15 a.m., four o'clock, a quarter after eight in the morning.

• Use numbers for book parts: Chapter 15, Practice 5, page 11 (not Chapter Fifteen . . .).

• Write out words for ages and anniversaries: Jack is fourteen years old; They celebrated their fiftieth anniversary.

• Write out words for periods of time: in the past forty years; a twenty-minute delay.

• Except for special uses in dates and addresses, write out the words for numbers that end in *-st*, *-th*, *-nd*, *-rd*

sounds: our fifteenth year together (not our 15th year together); her fourth marriage (not her 4th marriage).

• Use numbers conveniently in addresses: 1830 East 58 Street, Brooklyn, New York 11234, or 1830 East 58th Street; 5 Fifth Avenue.

• Use numbers to identify: Boeing 707; Channel 7; English 101; Route 17; WCBS, 88 on your radio.

EXERCISES

A. Correct any errors in the use of numbers that you find here.

1. at 10 o'clock _____
2. 305 eggs, fifty loaves of bread, 20 pounds of coffee

3. my 6th birthday _____
4. June 29th, 1980 _____
5. four thousand one hundred and ten miles _____
6. four and one half percent _____
7. at four thirty a.m. _____
8. a boy 20 years old _____
9. the 2nd house on the block _____
10. in Chapter Seven on page five hundred _____

B. Use numbers correctly in sentences of your own. Write all sentences on separate paper.

1. Write a sentence to tell what time you usually go to bed on Sunday night. Use either *o'clock*, *a.m.*, or *p.m.* in your answer.
2. Write a sentence that gives your school's address. Include the zip code.
3. Write a sentence that tells the number of hours of television you think an average student watches per week.
4. Write a sentence that tells how much money you expect to earn during your lifetime.
5. Write a sentence estimating the percentage of water in an orange.
6. Write a sentence explaining what fraction of the day you spend daydreaming.
7. Write a sentence giving the date of your birth (month, day, and year).
8. Write a sentence in which you describe the dimensions of your desk.
9. Write a sentence explaining the number of dollars you think it might have taken to put a man on the moon.
10. Write a sentence that gives an estimate of the number of miles per gallon one gets in a Cadillac versus a Honda motorcycle.