NUMBERS

When you use a number in writing you have to decide whether to use a figure or to spell it out as a word. In scientific and technical writing, figures predominate; in magazines and books of general interest, words predominate, although figures are also used. This handout offers guidelines for nontechnical writing.

Spell out a number when

- The number begins a sentence

  *Five hundred employees were laid off at Stanley Corporation.*

  **Note:** The sentence can be rearranged if spelling out the number requires three or more words.

  **Incorrect:** 829 people (or fifty-eight percent) who responded to the survey reported that they held jobs in fields outside of their college majors.

  **Correct:** Of those who responded to the survey, 829 people (or fifty-eight percent) reported that they held jobs in fields outside of their college majors.

- The number can be written in one or two words (except as noted in the back of this handout)

  *There are eleven players on the soccer field for each team.*

Add a Hyphen to written numbers when

- A number written as two words if it is under one hundred.

  *There are twenty-two students in the class.*

- Use a hyphen to separate the numerator from the denominator in written fractions.

  *Two-thirds of the class chose the correct answer.*

- Form the plural of numbers by adding “s” or “ies.”

  *Hundreds of geese flocked to the lake before heading south. Students in their twenties begin to start their secondary education.*

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Revised by Marli Stewart
Use a numeral for (unless it begins a sentence)

- Spelling out a number that requires more than two words.

  The population of Butterfield is 634.

- Addresses
  525 Elwell Avenue

- Dates
  June 30, 1969

- Exact times of the day
  11:11 a.m.

- Exact measurements followed by symbols or abbreviation
  55 m.p.h.

- Exact amounts of money
  $110.79

- Decimals and fractions
  2.5 3/5

- Percentages, scores or statistics
  38% score of 10-1

- Volume, chapter and page numbers
  Vol. I, Chapter 12, page 87

- Act, scene and line numbers
  Act III, Scene 2, lines 23-27