

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.*

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*