



Rules for Numbers in Writing

The rules regarding numbers in writing vary among academic disciplines. The conventions within engineering, for example, may differ from those within business. The guidelines below are appropriate within the context of general writing.

- ▶ Spell out numbers nine and under for both ordinal and cardinal numbers.

He made nine spelling errors.
He made 13 spelling errors.

She was the seventh applicant.
She was the 13th applicant.

- ▶ Spell out any number that begins a sentence.

Seven is my lucky number.

- ▶ Spell out any number that precedes another number expressed in numerals.

three 100-meter races

- ▶ Spell out indefinite numbers and amounts, including large approximations.

Over a billion people live in India.

- ▶ Spell out fractions that are less than one, but use numerals to avoid awkward wording.

The information industry will soon account for two-thirds of all jobs.
The share price of IBM rose by $3 \frac{7}{8}$.

- ▶ Spell out numbers that express the time, but use numerals if you use AM and PM. Times based on the twenty-four hour clock can be expressed in numerals.

Two o'clock
Two minutes to midnight

2 a.m.
23:58

- ▶ Spell out amounts of money that do not involve change, and write out the unit of currency as well. If you use symbols for currency, write the amount in numerals.

Twenty-seven dollars Canadian
Forty-five francs

\$27 Can
Fr 45

- ▶ Use numerals to express exact amounts of money.

\$1.98

- ▶ Use numerals when writing dates. Days nine and below that precede the month, or appear alone can be written out.

January 27, 1945

27 January 1945

Jo scheduled her meeting for the 13th.
Churchill visited on the 13th of May

Jo scheduled her meeting for the seventh.
Churchill visited on the seventh of May

- ▶ Use numerals for percentages. In some technical contexts, the symbol % may be used; otherwise, write out percent.

Only 32 percent of women surveyed were in favour of the candidate.

- ▶ When writing a list that includes numbers, be consistent, rather than follow individual rules.

We salvaged 3 lathes, 1 drill, and 13 welding machines.
I have one cat, two dogs, and three goldfish.

- ▶ Except in legal documents, do not express amounts in both figures and words.

25 (twenty-five)

Practice Exercise

Revise the sentences below according to the above guidelines.

1. Nearly 12,000 people attended the concert.
2. With only 5 out of twenty planes cleared for commercial flights, Flap-Your-Wings Airlines was suffering under the new safety restrictions.
3. On the 6th of June, the prince gave two of 12 development grants to an agricultural research organization.
4. 1000's of Ruttles fans streamed into the empty stadium on July 2 1966, many running to get places near the stage.

5. The ticket to the West Ham game cost fifteen pounds seventy-nine pence.
6. The heirs allocated $\frac{1}{2}$ of the estate for charitable organizations.
7. Mr Johnson read two novels, 14 articles, and 5 magazines during his holiday.
8. Your next appointment has been scheduled for January seventeenth
9. Of the fledgling albatrosses, sixty-two percent will return to the original nesting site.
10. Adrian finishes work at 16:00, but Steve works until eight PM.

Answers

1. Nearly twelve thousand people attended the concert.
2. With only five out of twenty planes cleared for commercial flights, Flap-Your-Wings Airlines was suffering under the new safety restrictions.
3. On the 6th of June, the prince gave 2 of 12 development grants to an agricultural research organization.
4. Thousands of Ruttles fans streamed into the empty stadium on July 2, 1966, many running to get places near the stage.
5. The ticket to the West Ham game cost £15.79.
6. The heirs allocated one half of the estate for charitable organizations.
7. Mr Johnson read 2 novels, 14 articles, and 5 magazines during his holiday.
8. Your next appointment has been scheduled for January 17th.
9. Of the fledgling albatrosses, 62 percent will return to the original nesting site.
10. Adrian finishes work at 4 p.m., but Steve works until 8 p.m.
Adrian finishes work at 16:00, but Steve works until 20:00.