

Using Numbers in Your Paper

Some universal rules to read before you begin:

- Never use a number to begin a sentence. Either write it out, or change the word order so the number is not at the beginning: *One thousand one hundred and fifty dollars is the cost of the car. The car costs \$1150.*
- Hyphenate all compound numbers between twenty-one and ninety-nine.

Numbers below nine:

- Write them out: *We had eight balloons.*

Math:

- Simple Fractions are written out with a hyphen: *Two-thirds of the planet is covered in water.*
- Mixed fractions are written as numbers unless it's the first word of a sentence: *There is a 2 ½ percent reduction in spending this quarter.* If it's the first word of a sentence: *Two and one-half percent will be reduced this quarter.*
- Decimals are written as numbers with a zero in front of them: *The cost rose 0.34 percent.*

Money:

- With less than one hundred dollars or one hundred cents, write out the words: *I spent ninety-eight dollars. The gum costs fifty-three cents.*
- For amounts over one hundred cents or dollars, use the dollar sign (\$) and numbers: *This couch costs \$535. The other gum costs \$1.50.* Be careful to keep the same style within a sentence, though. Don't write out one number and use numbers for the other; just write them both out: *This toothpaste costs \$0.89, but the other one costs \$1.96.*

Related and unrelated numbers:

- If you're writing about two numbers of one specific item or thing, and only one of them is below ten, then use numbers for both: *Of the 12 books, 7 had errors.* If both related numbers are below ten, write them out as usual: *Six of the seven pitchers were from China.*
- If you're writing about two numbers of two different items or things, use numbers on one and write out the other to differentiate: *There were seven houses and 10 apartments on the tour.*

Time:

- Write out all times except noon and midnight as such: *The show times are 12:04 a.m. and 3:10 p.m.*
- Write out noon and midnight: *Is the party at noon or midnight?*

Dates:

- When the month comes first: *The game is on March 4, 2012.*
- When the day comes first: *The game is on the 4th of March.*

Decades:

- When writing about decades, write them out in lowercase: *The economy plummeted and surged during the twenties and thirties.*
- When shortening the names of decades with an apostrophe, always put the apostrophe BEFORE the first number, not between the last number and the *s*: *The economy plummeted and surged during the '20s and '30s.*
- When using numbers to indicate decades while including the century, do not use an apostrophe anywhere: *The economy plummeted and surged during the 1920s and 1930s.*

Centuries:

- Always write out centuries, and do not capitalize them: *This occurred during the eighteenth century.*