



# Using Numbers in Writing

- **Rule #1:** Write out a number if it begins a sentence.
- **Rule #2:** Spell out single-digit whole numbers. Use numerals for numbers greater than nine.
- **Rule #3:** Be consistent within a category. For example, if you choose numerals because one of the numbers is greater than nine, use numerals for all numbers in that category. If you choose to spell out numbers because one of the numbers is a single digit, spell out all numbers in that category.
- **Rule #4:** Always spell out simple fractions and use hyphens with them. A mixed fraction can be expressed in figures unless it is the first word of a sentence.
  - ⇒ **Example:** one-fourth
- **Rule #5:** The simplest way to express large numbers is best. Round numbers are usually spelled out. Be careful to be consistent within a sentence.
- **Rule #6:** Write decimals in figures. Put a zero in front of a decimal unless the decimal itself begins with a zero.
  - ⇒ **Example:** 0.3
- **Rule #7:** With numbers of four or more digits, use commas. Count three spaces to the left of the ones column to place the first comma. If the number contains seven or more digits, continue placing commas after every three places.
  - ⇒ **Example:** 123,456 or 1,234
- **Rule #8:** The following examples apply when using dates: The meeting is scheduled for June 30. The meeting is scheduled for the 30th of June. We have had tricks played on us on April 1.
- **Rule #9:** When expressing decades, you may spell them out and lowercase them.
  - ⇒ **Example:** seventies, eighties, nineties, twentieth century
- **Rule #10:** If you wish to express decades using incomplete numerals, put an apostrophe before the incomplete numeral but not between the year and the “s.”
- **Rule #11:** You may also express decades in complete numerals. Again, don't use an apostrophe between the year and the “s.”
- **Rule #12:** Spell out the time of day in text even with half and quarter hours. With o'clock, the number is always spelled out.
- **Rule #13:** Use numerals with the time of day when exact times are being emphasized, or when using A.M. or P.M.



- **Rule #14:** Use noon and midnight rather than 12:00 P.M. and 12:00 A.M.
- **Rule #15:** Hyphenate all compound numbers from twenty-one through ninety-nine.
- **Rule #16:** Use numbers when you are using an exact year.

## Additional Resources

For more specific information on writing with numbers, check out our [MLA 9](#) and [APA 7](#) resource.

**Further Assistance:** For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.

**Sources Consulted:** Grammarbook.com