

# numerals

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In general, spell out one through nine: *The Yankees finished second. He had nine months to go.*

Use figures for 10 or above and whenever preceding a unit of measure or referring to ages of people, animals, events or things. Also in all tabular matter, and in statistical and sequential forms.

## Use figures for:

**ACADEMIC COURSE NUMBERS:** *History 6, Philosophy 209.*

**ADDRESSES:** *210 Main St.* Spell out numbered streets nine and under: *5 Sixth Ave.; 3012 50th St.; No. 10 Downing St.* Use the abbreviations *Ave., Blvd. and St.* only with a numbered address: *1600 Pennsylvania Ave.* Spell them out and capitalize without a number: *Pennsylvania Avenue.*

See **addresses**.

**AGES:** *a 6-year-old girl; an 8-year-old law; the 7-year-old house.* Use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun. *A 5-year-old boy, but the boy is 5 years old. The boy, 5, has a sister, 10. The race is for 3-year-olds. The woman is in her 30s. 30-something, but Thirty-something* to start a sentence.

See **ages**.

**PLANES, SHIPS AND SPACECRAFT DESIGNATIONS:** *B-2 bomber, Queen Elizabeth 2, QE2, Apollo 9, Viking 2* An exception: *Air Force One*, the president's plane. Use Roman numerals if they are part of the official designation: *Titan I, Titan II.*

See **aircraft names; boats, ships; spacecraft designations**.

**CENTURIES:** Use figures for numbers 10 or higher: *21st century.* Spell out for numbers nine and lower: *fifth century.* (Note lowercase.) For proper names, follow the organization's usage.

**COURT DECISIONS:** *The Supreme Court ruled 5-4, a 5-4 decision.* The word *to* is not needed, except in quotations: *"The court ruled 5 to 4."*

– Court districts: *5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.*

**DATES, YEARS AND DECADES:** *Feb. 8, 2007, Class of '66, the 1950s.* For the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, *9/11* is acceptable in all references. (Note comma to set off the year when the phrase refers to a month, date and year.)

**DECIMALS, PERCENTAGES AND FRACTIONS WITH NUMBERS LARGER THAN 1:** *7.2 magnitude quake, 3 1/2 laps, 3.7% interest, 4 percentage points.* Decimalization should not exceed two places in most text material. Exceptions: blood alcohol content, expressed in three decimals: as in *0.056*, and batting averages in baseball, as in *.324*. For amounts less than 1, precede the decimal with a zero: *The cost of living rose 0.03%*. Spell out fractions less than 1, using hyphens between the words: *two-thirds, four-fifths*. In quotations, use figures for fractions: *"He was 2 1/2 laps behind with four to go."*

See **decimal units; fractions; percent, percentage, percentage points.**

**DIMENSIONS, TO INDICATE DEPTH, HEIGHT, LENGTH AND WIDTH:** *He is 5 feet, 6 inches tall, the 5-foot-6 man* ("inch" is understood), *the 5-foot man, the basketball team signed a 7-footer. The car is 17 feet long, 6 feet wide and 5 feet high. The rug is 9 feet by 12 feet, the 9-by-12 rug. A 9-inch snowfall.* Exception: *two-by-four*. Spell out the noun, which refers to any length of untrimmed lumber approximately 2 inches thick by 4 inches wide.

See **dimensions.**

**DISTANCES:** *He walked 4 miles. He missed a 3-foot putt.*

**GOLF CLUBS:** *3-wood, 7-iron, 3-hybrid* (note hyphen).

**HIGHWAY DESIGNATIONS:** *Interstate 5, U.S. Highway 1, state Route 1A.* (Do not abbreviate *Route*. No hyphen between highway designation and number.)

See **highway designations.**

**MATHEMATICAL USAGE:** *Multiply by 4, divide by 6. He added 2 and 2 but got 5.*

**MILITARY RANKS, USED AS TITLES WITH NAMES, MILITARY TERMS AND WEAPONS:** *Petty Officer 2nd Class Alan Markow, Spc. Alice Moreno, 1st Sgt. David Triplett, M16 rifle, 9 mm* (note space) *pistol, 6th Fleet.* In military ranks, spell out the figure when it is used after the name or without a name: *Smith was a second lieutenant. The goal is to make first sergeant.*

See **military units**.

**MILLIONS, BILLIONS, TRILLIONS:** Use a figure-word combination. *1 million people; \$2 billion*, NOT *one million/two billion*. (Also note no hyphen linking numerals and the word *million, billion* or *trillion*.)

See **millions, billions, trillions; dollars**.

**MONETARY UNITS:** *5 cents, \$5 bill, 8 euros, 4 pounds*.

See **cents**.

**ODDS, PROPORTIONS AND RATIOS:** *9-1 long shot; 3 parts cement to 1 part water; a 1-4 chance*, but *one chance in three*.

See **betting odds; proportions; ratios**.

**RANK:** *He was my No. 1 choice*. (Note abbreviation for "Number"). *Kentucky was ranked No. 3. The band had five Top 40 hits*.

**SCHOOL GRADES:** Use figures for grades 10 and above: *10th grade*. Spell out for first through ninth grades: *fourth grade, fifth grader*.

**SEQUENTIAL DESIGNATIONS:** *Page 1, Page 20A. They were out of sizes 4 and 5; magnitude 6 earthquake; Rooms 3 and 4; Chapter 2; line 1 but first line; Act 3, Scene 4, but third act, fourth scene; Game 1, but best of seven*.

See **act numbers; chapters; earthquakes; line numbers; page numbers; scene numbers**.

**POLITICAL DISTRICTS:** *Ward 9, 9th Precinct, 3rd Congressional District*.

See **congressional districts; political divisions**.

– Recipes: *2 tablespoons of sugar to 1 cup of milk*.

See **recipes**.

**SPEEDS:** *7 mph, winds of 5 to 10 mph, winds of 7 to 9 knots*.

**SPORTS SCORES, STANDINGS AND STANDARDS:** *The Dodgers defeated the Phillies 10-3* (No comma between the team and the score); in golf, *3 up*, but *a 3-up lead; led 3-2; a 6-1-2 record*(six wins, one loss, two ties); *par 3; 5 handicap, 5-under-par 67*but *he was 5 under par* (or *5 under*, with "par" understood). In narrative, spell out

nine and under except for yard lines in football and individual and team statistical performances: *The ball was on the 5-yard line. Seventh hole. In basketball, 3-point play and 3-point shot. In statistical performances, hyphenate as a modifier: He completed 8 of 12 passes. He made 5 of 6 (shots is understood). He was 5-for-12 passing. He had a 3-for-5 day. He was 3-for-5. He went 3-for-5 (batting, shooting, etc., is understood).*

**TEMPERATURES:** Use figures, except zero. *It was 8 degrees below zero or minus 8. The temperature dropped from 38 to 8 in two hours.*

See **temperatures**.

**TIMES:** Use figures for time of day except for noon and midnight: *1 p.m., 10:30 a.m., 5 o'clock, 8 hours, 30 minutes, 20 seconds, a winning time of 2:17:3 (2 hours, 17 minutes, 3 seconds).* Spell out numbers less than 10 standing alone and in modifiers: *I'll be there in five minutes. He scored with two seconds left. An eight-hour day. The two-minute warning.*

See **times**; **time sequences**.

**VOTES:** *The bill was defeated by a vote of 6-4, but by a two-vote margin.*

## **Spell out:**

**AT THE START OF A SENTENCE:** In general, spell out numbers at the start of a sentence: *Forty years was a long time to wait. Fifteen to 20 cars were involved in the accident.* An exception is years: *1992 was a very good year.* Another exception: Numeral(s) and letter(s) combinations: *401(k) plans are offered. 4K TVs are flying off the shelves. 3D movies are drawing more fans.*

See **years**.

**IN INDEFINITE AND CASUAL USES:** *Thanks a million. He walked a quarter of a mile. One at a time; a thousand clowns; one day we will know; an eleventh-hour decision; dollar store; a hundred dollars.*

**IN FANCIFUL USAGE OR PROPER NAMES:** *Chicago Seven, Fab Four, Big Three automakers, Final Four, the Four Tops.*

**IN FORMAL LANGUAGE, RHETORICAL QUOTATIONS AND FIGURES OF SPEECH:** *"Fourscore and seven years ago ..." Twelve Apostles, Ten Commandments, high-five, Day One.*

**IN FRACTIONS LESS THAN ONE THAT ARE NOT USED AS MODIFIERS:** *reduced by one-third, he made three-fourths of his shots.*

## **ROMAN NUMERALS**

They may be used for wars and to establish personal sequence for people and animals: *World War I, Native Dancer II, King George V*. Also for certain legislative acts (*Title IX*). Otherwise, use sparingly. Pro football Super Bowls should be identified by the year, rather than the Roman numerals: *1969 Super Bowl*, not *Super Bowl III*.

## **ORDINALS**

Numbers used to indicate order (first, second, 10th, 25th, etc.) are called ordinal numbers. Spell out first through ninth: *fourth grade, first base, the First Amendment, he was first in line*. Use figures starting with 10th.

## **CARDINAL NUMBERS**

Numbers used in counting or showing how many (2, 40, 627, etc.) are called cardinal numbers. The following separate entries provide additional guidance for cardinal numbers:

**amendments to the Constitution**

**channel**

**court names**

**decades**

**election returns**

**fleet**

**formula**

**latitude and longitude**

**mile**

**parallels**

proportions

serial numbers

telephone numbers

weights

**SOME OTHER PUNCTUATION AND USAGE EXAMPLES:**

- *3 ounces*
  - *4-foot-long*
  - *4-foot fence*
  - *"The president's speech lasted 28 1/2 minutes," she said.*
  - *DC-10 but 747B*
  - *the 1980s, the '80s*
  - *the House voted 230-205 (fewer than 1,000 votes)*
  - *Jimmy Carter outpolled Gerald Ford 40,827,292 to 39,146,157 (more than 1,000 votes)*
  - *Carter outpolled Ford 10 votes to 2 votes in Little Junction (to avoid confusion with ratio)*
  - *No. 3 choice, but Public School 3*
  - *a pay increase of 12%-15%. Or: a pay increase of between 12% and 15%, or a pay increase of 12% to 15%*
- But: *from \$12 million to \$14 million*
- *a ratio of 2-to-1, a 2-1 ratio*
  - *1 in 4 voters*
  - *seven houses 7 miles apart*
  - *He walked 4 miles.*
  - *minus 10, zero, 60 degrees (spell out minus)*

**OTHER USES:** For uses not covered by these listings, spell out whole numbers below 10, and use figures for 10 and above: *They had three sons and two*

*daughters. They had a fleet of 10 station wagons and two buses.*

**IN A SERIES:** Apply the standard guidelines: *They had 10 dogs, six cats and 97 hamsters. They had four four-room houses, 10 three-room houses and 12 10-room houses.*