

Numbers

Ages:

Except in formal writing, definite ages should be expressed in numerals:

10 years old, a lad of 5 years, 47 years old

Formal: Many people retire at age sixty-five.

Dates:

In very formal writing (invitations, etc.), the date is spelled out:

eighty-nine Saturday, May sixth, one thousand nine hundred and

or

 Saturday, May sixth, nineteen hundred and eighty-
nine

In letters and informal writing shorten the date:

Saturday, May 6, 1989

Decimals and Percentage:

Use numerals to express decimals. When expressing a decimal that is not preceded by a whole number, add a zero to the left of the decimal point (period) unless the first digit to the right is a zero:

23.7765 0.897 0.6 .0076

You may use numerals to express percentages, but always spell out a percentage at the beginning of a sentence:

We were over 80 percent in attendance.

—BUT—

Eighty percent were in attendance.

In tabulations, memos, etc., use % instead of spelling out "percent":

We lost 80% of our office staff to the recent flu epidemic.

Dimensions, Distance, Measure, Temperature, Weight:

In formal writing use numerals to express units of:

Dimension: 5 by 8 feet
-NOT-
5 x 8 feet or 5' by 8'

Distance: 25 miles
-BUT-
Spell out a fraction of a mile (a quarter of a mile).

Measure: 5 pints, 25 gallons, 10 bushels, 3
liters

Temperature: 105° F, 25° C

Weight: 16 grams, 3 ounces, 40 pounds,
105 tons

In less formal writing, abbreviate, but do not capitalize:

10 ft 5 in 30 mi 100 yd 10
lbs 4 oz

In technical writing use ' for feet, " for inches, and x for by:

6' x 9' 6' 8" x 3' 4"

Fractions:

Where possible, fractions should either be spelled out or expressed as decimals :

a quarter of an acre — 0.25 acre — 1/4 acre
—NOT—
0.25 of an acre — 1/4 of an acre — 1/4th acre

When a fraction is the subject of a sentence, the verb must agree with the noun in the prepositional phrase:

Nine-tenths of the people were late.

Three-fourths of the plant was damaged.

General:

In formal writing, numbers should be spelled out unless they are very long:

ten, fifty, ninety-nine
-BUT-
5,280

Never start a sentence with a numeral. When possible, rephrase a sentence to begin with another word. Otherwise, spell it out:

Ten dollars was enough for a pretty good time back then.

Back then, one could have a pretty good time for ten dollars.

Spell out approximations:

about a hundred miles, approximately four pounds

Spell out round numbers:

one hundred, a million, five thousand

Spell out numbers from one through ten, except in related series:

2 ducks, 5 geese, 7 chickens, and 10 hogs

When related numbers appear within a sentence, be consistent in expressing them:

15 gallons of gas for each 100 miles
or
fifteen gallons of gas for each one hundred miles

But, when numbers appear together, spell out the shorter of the two:

10 twenty-cent cigars, a hundred 1975 Mustangs

Use numerals to express exact amounts and/or long numbers:

246 passengers; 1,658,400 light years from Earth

Money:

In formal writing small amounts of money should be spelled out:

ten dollars, two hundred dollars, fifty cents

In less formal writing, and when expressing larger amounts, use numerals:

50 million dollars or \$50 million;

\$2.5 million or two and a half million dollars;

\$2.75 billion; \$750,000; \$1,500; \$675.50

Use ¢ for cents only when there are no dollars in the amount:

50¢ (same as \$.50) 5¢ (same as \$.05)

But never use both: \$1.50¢

Page Numbers & Roman Numerals:

Always use numerals for page numbers:

page 3, page 649

Table of Roman numerals:

1-I; 2-II; 3-III; 4-IV; 5-V; 6-VI; 7-VII; 8-VIII; 9-IX; 10-X

11-XI; 14-XIV; 19-XIX; 20-XX; 30-XXX 40-XL; 50-L; 60-LX; 70-LXX; 80-LXXX

90-XC; 100-C; 200-CC; 300-CCC; 400-CD; 500-D; 600-DC; 900-CM; 1000-M

4000-MV; 5000-V; 10,000-X; 100,000-C; 1,000,000-M; 1989-MCMLXXXIX

Time:

In formal writing spell out the time of day:

eight in the morning, five o'clock that night

In letters, memos, instructions, etc., use numerals to express time:

8 a.m. or 8 A.M.

4:45 p.m. or 4:45 P.M.

Do not add zeros to even hours unless a time containing minutes appears in the same sentence:

The first train arrives at 8 a.m.

The trains will arrive hourly from 8:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m.

Spell out decades and centuries:

those fabulous sixties, the sixteenth century