

The WRITING CENTER

Elftmann Student
Success Center

A Guide On How To:

Use Numbers In Writing

- Rules for use
- Spell out number
- Use a number
- Use both



Using Numbers in Writing

What are the general rules for using numbers in writing?

Check your style guide for exact rulings, but the general idea is to make sure what you say is clear. Be consistent in your choices. If you start spelling out all numbers, then keep spelling out all numbers. In other words, if the meaning of the sentence is impaired by how you express a number, change the way you write it. Here are some basic guidelines:

	Purpose	Example
Spell out a numeral when:	Numerals starts a sentence	<i>Eighteen students are enrolled in this class</i>
	Two- word numbers	<i>There will be twenty-two students in the shop today.</i>
	Number less than ten	<i>We need nine copies of the handbook.</i>
	The smaller of two numerals written next to each other	<i>There are four 18-year-olds in our class.</i>
	A rounded number or estimation	<i>Students who use the Success Center are about four times as likely to graduate on time.</i>
	An ordinal	<i>Students in their first quarter often take introductory courses.</i>
	A fraction of less than one	<i>Of all students, one-half drive themselves.</i>
	Part of the name of a century or decade	<i>The first Apple computer kit went on the market in the Seventies.</i> <i>Apple continues to influence the technology of the twenty-first century.</i>
	Name of a street, and space is not an issue	<i>Students can park along Eighth Avenue for the time being.</i>
	Name of a political or military unit (one hundred or less)	<i>She is the senator for the Seventh Precinct.</i> <i>The Fifty-third Regiment is being sent to Iraq today.</i>
	Expresses time using o'clock	<i>Class will start promptly at eleven o'clock today.</i>

Use the numeral when:

Modifies a unit of measure, proportion, age, etc.	<i>Use a margin of 2 inches for this paper. You must be 18 years of age to vote.</i>
Expresses a decimal or money	<i>A circle is .7854 times the square that contains it. The cost is \$3.15.</i>
A number greater than ten	<i>There is a set of 32 textbooks in each box.</i>
An exact statistic	<i>In 2007, the population of Minneapolis was 377,392.</i>
The larger of two numerals written next to each other	<i>There are four 18-year-olds in our class.</i>
Date or year	<i>In 2007, the population of Minneapolis was 377,392.</i>
Score	<i>The average score on the quizzes were 62 out of a possible 70 points.</i>
An address house or building number	<i>Dunwoody is located at 818 Dunwoody Boulevard in Minneapolis.</i>
Used to express a range	<i>There are between 18 and 25 students in the cafeteria.</i>
Used to express exact time	<i>Classes will end today at 12:30 p.m.</i>
Name of a political or military unit (one hundred or more)	<i>The 107th Congressional Session introduced the No Child Left Behind Act.</i>



Combination

Figure expressed in more than two words	<i>It is estimated that 400 million people will watch the royal wedding.</i>
Two numerals are used next to each other	<i>There are four 18-year-olds in our class.</i>
Used to show percentages or measurement	<i>Students need to earn 75 percent (not %) of the points to pass the class.</i>

References

- Capital Community College. (2004). Guide to grammar and writing. Retrieved from <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/index.htm>
- Michael. (2007). 10 rules for writing numbers and numerals. Retrieved from <http://www.dailywritingtips.com/10-rules-for-writing-numbers-and-numerals/>

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