

Quick guide: numbers

The following rules apply to numbers in general content. They don't apply to numbers in technical or scientific material.

Use numerals for '2' and above

Numerals are generally easier than words for people to scan.

Example

There are 7 sheets of paper left.

The plan includes 4 new wind farms.

Write the numbers 'zero' and 'one' in words

Some typefaces make it difficult to tell the difference between '0' and '1' and certain letters. Writing 'zero' and 'one' means users will know they're reading a number.

Example

The government has set a target of net-zero emissions.

Only one person applied for the position.

Exceptions

There are some exceptions to these 2 rules.

You can use words for numbers below 10 in government writing that follows journalistic conventions (e.g. media releases).

Example

zero one two three four five six seven eight
nine 10 11 12 ... [Journalistic style]

Use words for a number that starts a sentence.

Example

Eighty-nine people voted.

Write the numerals '0' and '1':

- for units of measurement
- for times of day
- to compare numbers
- in a series of numbers.

Example

0.15 cm

1:08 pm

There is a 1-in-4 chance to win a prize.

Job vacancies were as follows: 5 in October,
2 in November and 0 in December.

Other number rules

Use commas in numbers with 4 or more digits. Separate the digits into groups of 3 (working from right to left).

Example

The funding allocated was \$6,750,550.

The town is home to 4,210 people.

Always use words for:

- fractions when users need only a general idea of values
- proper nouns that include a number in words
- figures of speech.

Example

About three-quarters of staff attended the meeting.

The suburb of Seven Hills is part of the Blacktown local government area.

That's my two bob's worth.

Always use numerals:

- for large numbers when it's important to be precise
- to show mathematical relationships
- when using the percentage symbol
- for centuries
- for decimals.

Example

The population of Australia in 2013 was 23,291,216.

$6 + 1 = 7$

A 1% levy on industry funded the remediation. That work is 95% complete.

The exhibition includes pottery from the 1st and 2nd centuries.

0.81

Use words and numerals for:

- large rounded numbers from a million
- ordinal numbers.

Example

3 million

first second third fourth fifth sixth seventh eighth ninth 10th 11th ... 21st 22nd 23rd

Use numerals and symbols for amounts of money, unless it's an approximation.

Example

20c

\$1

The tunnel cost thousands of dollars.

Visit stylemanual.gov.au and search 'numbers and measurements'.