

WRITING NUMBERS

Style Manuals and journals vary in their instructions regarding the writing of numbers. In general, however, the following rules apply:

Use of Numerals. The general rule governing APA Style¹ on the use of numbers is to use numerals to express numbers 10 and above and words to express numbers below 10. Use numbers to express:

- a. numbers 10 and above
- b. numbers in the abstract of a paper or in a graphical display within a paper
- c. numbers that immediately precede a unit of measurement
- d. numbers that represent statistical or mathematical functions, fractional or decimal quantities, percentages, ratios, and percentiles and quartiles
- e. numbers that represent time, dates, ages, scores and points on a scale, exact sums of money
- f. numbers that denote a specific place in a numbered series, parts of books and tables, and each number in a list of four or more numbers

At 5:45 p.m., October 15, 1994, the researchers completed the final experiment.

Numbers Expressed in Words

Use words to express

- a. any number that begins a sentence, title, or test heading
- b. common fractions [one-fifth of the class; two-thirds majority]
- c. universally accepted usage [the Twelve Apostles; Five Pillars of Islam]

Use combination of numerals to express back-to-back modifiers [2 two-way interactions; ten 7-point scales.

A combination of numerals and words in these situations increases the clarity and readability of the construction. In some situations, however, readability may suffer; in such a case, spell out both numbers [first two items—*not* 1st two items, or first 2 items]

Treat ordinal numbers as you would cardinal numbers:

Ordinal	Cardinal
second-order factor	two orders
the fourth graders	four grades
the first item of the 75 th trial	one item, 75 trials
the first and third groups	one group, three groups

Use commas between groups of three digits in most figures of 1,000 or more.

[Exceptions: page numbers, binary digits, serial numbers, degrees of temperature, degrees of freedom]

For large numbers, use a combination of numerals and words rather than a long string of zeros [Example: 1.2 billion; 5.5 trillion].

¹ American Psychological Association Publication Manual, 6th Ed. August 2009, pp.111-113