

AMA Manual of Style

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Numbers and Percentages

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Any policy on the use of numbers in text must take into account the reader's impression that numbers written as numerals (symbols) appear to emphasize quantity more strongly than numbers spelled out as words. Because numerals convey quantity more efficiently than spelled-out numbers, they are generally preferable in technical writing. In literary writing, by contrast, spelled-out numbers may be more compatible with style. Despite these general principles, usage may appear inconsistent when a publication chooses to use numerals in some instances and words in others. The guidelines outlined in this section attempt to reduce these inconsistencies and avoid use of numerals that may be jarring to the reader. In situations that are not governed by these guidelines, common sense and editorial judgment should prevail.

Use of Numerals

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In scientific writing, numerals are used to express numbers in most circumstances. Exceptions are the following: # Numbers that begin a sentence, title, subtitle, or heading # Common fractions # Accepted usage such as idiomatic expressions and numbers used as pronouns # Other uses of "one" in running text # Ordinals first through ninth # Numbers spelled out in quotes or published titles. (See , Spelling Out Numbers.) Note the following examples of numerals in text: The relative risk of exposed individuals was nearly 3 times that of the controls. In the second phase of the study, 3 of the

Spelling Out Numbers

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Use words to express numbers that occur at the beginning of a sentence, title, subtitle, or heading; for common fractions; for accepted usage and numbers used as pronouns; for ordinals first through ninth; and when part of a published quote or title in which the number is spelled out. When spelling out numerals, hyphenate twenty-one through ninety-nine when these numbers occur alone or as part of a larger number. When numbers greater than 100 are spelled out, do not use commas or and (eg, one hundred thirty-two). | Use words for any number that begins a sentence, title, subtitle, or

Combining Numerals and Words

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Use a combination of numerals and words to express rounded large numbers and consecutive numerical expressions. | Rounded large numbers, such as those starting with million, should be expressed with numerals and words. The disease affects 5 million to 6 million people. [Note that the word million is repeated to avoid ambiguity.] The word million signifies the quantity 10⁶, while billion signifies the quantity 10⁹. Although billion has traditionally signified 10¹² (1 million million) in Britain, many British medical journals now use billion to indicate the quantity 10⁹. A number may be expressed in million rather than billion if the latter

Use of Digit Spans and Hyphens

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Digits should not be omitted when indicating a span of years or page numbers in the text. Hyphens may be used in text when a year span is used as the identifying characteristic of a study (eg, the 1982-1984 NHANES survey), but only when the actual dates of the study have been defined previously in the text; if the dates are not defined in the text, the hyphen is ambiguous and may or may not mean that the dates indicated are inclusive. In certain circumstances, such as fiscal year or academic year, the actual span may be understood and no

Abbreviating Number

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The word number may be abbreviated No. in the body of tables and line art or in the text when used as a specific designator. Do not use the number sign (#) in place of the abbreviation. The word number should always be spelled out when it is used as a proper noun (eg, “Social Security number”). When referring to numbers of individuals in a study in tables, figures, and within parentheses the abbreviation N is used when referring to the entire sample; n refers to a subsample. (See also , Study Design and Statistics, Glossary of Statistical Terms.)Patients were

Enumerations

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Indicate a short series of enumerated items by numerals run in and enclosed within parentheses in the text (see also , Punctuation, Parentheses and Brackets).The testing format focused on 6 aspects: (1) alertness and concentration, (2) language, (3) naming, (4) calculations, (5) construction, and (6) memory. For long or complex enumerations, indented numbers followed by a period, without parentheses, may be used.In response to other issues: 1. The study was conducted under 2 protocols that prespecified that the data would be pooled for the analyses. 2. A particular regression procedure (model selection stepdown) was applied individually for clinical outcomes. 3.

Numbers of 4 or More Digits to Either Side of the Decimal Point

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Commas are not used in large numbers. In 4-digit numbers, the digits are set closed up. For numbers of 10000 or greater, a half-space or thin space is used to separate every 3 digits starting from the right-most integer (or, in numbers with decimals, from the left of the decimal point). For numbers with 5 or more digits to the right of the decimal point, a half-space is used between every 3 digits starting from the right of the decimal point (see also , Units of Measure, Use of Numerals With Units).The exact weight of the salt was 8.453 98 g,

Mixed Fractions

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For less precise measurements, mixed fractions may be used instead of decimals. These expressions usually involve time. Common fractions are typically spelled out (see ,

Spelling Out Numbers, Common Fractions). The surgery lasted 3¼ hours. The patient was hospitalized for 5½ days. Of the patients returning for a second visit, half received the intervention. |

Measures of Time

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Measures of time usually are expressed as numerals (see also , Abbreviations, Days of the Week, Months, Eras). When dates are provided, numerals should be used for day and year; the month should be spelled out unless listed in a table. Conventional form for time and dates (11:30 pm on February 25, 1961) is preferred to European or military form (2330 on 25 February 1961). However, use of military time may clarify the time course in figures that depict a 24-hour experiment, times of drug dosing, and the like. For time, if the hour of the day is given, am