

## **Numbers** (Contents)

“Among the factors governing the choice between spelling out numbers and using numerals are whether the number is large or small, whether it is an approximation or an exact quantity, what kind of entity it stands for, and what context it appears in” (CMS 2003, 380). Precise measurements are always presented as numerals.

In nontechnical contexts, the following are spelled out: whole numbers from one through one hundred, round numbers, and any number beginning a sentence. For other numbers, numerals are used” (CMS 2003, 380).

1. *Round numbers.* By virtue of their rounding, these numbers are imprecise. They are written out. For example, write “The federal deficit was increased by two hundred billion dollars,” or “San Francisco is about twelve hundred miles from Denver.” But also write, “The race followed a straight course from Denver to San Francisco, a distance of 1,255.6 miles.”
2. *Beginning a sentence.* When numbers or a date are required to open a sentence, write them out. For example: “One hundred five girls and sixteen boys tried out for the varsity soccer team.” If you can, rewrite the sentence so it does not begin with a number.
3. *Mixed numbers?* Do not mix numerals with written numbers when they refer to similar things. For example, write “Only 10 of the 150 tourists were willing to visit the city after the riot.” Do not write, “Only ten of the 150 tourists . . .”
4. *Mixed sets of numbers.* Sometimes two sets of numbers are embedded in a single sentence. For clarity, present one set written out, the other as numerals. For example, write “There were eighty-three contestants who dropped out before covering 50 miles, and one hundred thirty-five before covering 250 miles.”
5. *Numbers & units.* Generally, do not mix numbers that are spelled out with symbols, write out the term for the symbols as well. For example, write: the temperature was 45 °, or *forty-five degrees*; \$20 or *twenty dollars*. Chicago style makes an exception for percentages: it is OK to write *45 percent*.
6. *Compound numbers.* Hyphenate compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine, compounds with a number as the first element, and the written form of fractions.
7. *Ordinal numbers.* Follow the general rules as for other numbers. For example, write: “The window for applications was the third to twenty-third of August.” But use numerals with ordinal numbers above one hundred. For example, write: “Haile Sellassie I was the 225th Emperor of Ethiopia.”
8. *Centuries.* Write out references to centuries, the eighteenth century, the twenty-first century, in lower cased letters.