

JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
NUMBERS IN WRITING

1. Numbers that can be written in two words or LESS should ordinarily be spelled out.

Examples:

Standing in line were three former students.

She reserved seven hundred seats.

Alfred spent seventeen years in the service.

2. Use figures for any number that requires more than two words.

Examples:

There were 737 cases of measles that year.

On their vacation they drove 4,321 miles.

3. In using numbers with percentages, dollars, degrees, decimals, page numbers, and so on, one can either use figures or write the number if it is two words or less. Be consistent, however.

Examples:

15% or fifteen percent or 15.3 percent

\$177.99 or \$177 (but not both within the same list) .

.46 inch, 2.46 miles, .37 centimeters

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4. Figures are used for the day of the year, the year, and for times when followed by A.M. or P.M. (which may also be written a.m. and p.m.)

Examples:

The baby was born at 11 a.m. June 24, 1981.

I will meet you at three o'clock.

5. Spell out all numbers that begin a sentence, even though they are ordinarily represented by figures. Reword sentences if necessary to eliminate numbers at the beginnings.

Example: Four hundred sixty dollars was too high a price.

Wrong: 2,655 entries were received in the children's coloring contest.

Revised: In the children's coloring contest, 2,655 entries were received.

6. Use figures for long numbers, but not for large numbers that are estimates.

Examples:

She invited 1,275 guests to attend her wedding.

She invited a thousand guests to attend her wedding.

7. Use an apostrophe to indicate omissions in dates.

Examples:

The class of 1982.

The class of '82

8. Use apostrophes to form the plurals of numerals (and letters) and set the number (or letter) in italics or enclose in quotation marks when used as a word.

Examples:

Her "m's" look like "w's" and her "6's" look like "G's."

The French cross their "7 's" so that they will not be confused with their "I's."

9. A hyphen is used in compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine and to separate the numerator and the denominator in written fractions.

Examples:

Twenty-six, sixty-three, but one hundred and thirty two-thirds, one-fifth

10. In business and technical writing, numbers above ten are often written as numerals. Moreover, numbers are often repeated in parentheses in this type of writing, but not in standard writing.

Technical, commercial: The interest on the note was fifty (50) dollars.

Standard: The interest on the note was fifty dollars.

11. It is appropriate to use in the same sentence a combination of words and numerals where such a combination clarifies the idea.

Examples:

You may take only six 6-inch trout from this stream.

The child counted 20 one-dollar bills.

12. Be consistent in your treatment of numbers. Related numbers should be treated similarly. Do not use figures for some and words for others.
Wrong: My father is 40, my mother is 37, I am 12, and my sister is ten. (For consistency's sake, the "ten" should be written "10.")

At the grocery store she purchased five pounds of sugar, ten pounds of potatoes, 16 pork chops, two dozen cookies, and three heads of lettuce. ("Sixteen," not "16," or convert the whole list to numerals).

The prime rib dinner cost \$15.95, the lobster \$19.95, and the pan-fried chicken \$9. (\$15.95, \$19.95, and \$9.00)

TEST YOURSELF: Most of the following sentences contain one or more errors in the use of numbers. Correct the ones that are incorrect and write "C" before the sentences that are correct as written.

1. 2,000 years ago, an important event took place in Palestine.
2. Including finance charges, this new car would cost you thirty thousand six hundred and thirty-eight dollars.
3. They live at nine-O-eight President Street, apartment three E.
4. Dennis drinks about 36 cases of wine every year.
5. A total of seven and three tenths inches of rain fell.
6. Some students spend as much as \$.95 for bus fare daily.
7. 85,000 people viewed the President's press conference.
8. Labor Day is the first Monday in September.
9. Retail prices were found to be nearly fifteen percent higher in the ghetto than in other areas of the city.
10. Of five hundred students in the senior class, only one hundred and fifty attended the prom.
11. I promised to pay him ninety-eight fifty-six on February twenty-third. I
12. It's either the fourteenth of September or the seventeenth--the odds are ~ thirty to one that I'll forget which. ",~
13. Take your application to room thirty-two; someone will be there by four p.m.
14. He was useful to the track team because he could run the four forty and could double in the ten thousand meters.
15. 9 years ago, I had an operation and was in the hospital for 3 weeks.
16. 3 years ago I owned a Volkswagen.
17. The average annual rainfall in the Mat to Grosso district of Brazil is one hundred twelve point seven three centimeters.
18. On February second, nineteen twenty-two, he managed to publish a

book of some seven hundred pages.

19. On page five, there is a good description of a corrupt man.

20. His author's royalties amounted to twelve percent of the price of the book.

Writing Center