Tip #10  Numbers

**Guideline #1:** NEVER begin a sentence with a numeral.

**Action:** Choice 1—reword the sentence if you want to retain the arabic numeral, or Choice 2—spell out the number.

**Caveat:** Always follow the guidelines of a designated style manual or those of the journal you are submitting a manuscript to for possible publication of your research.

**Incorrect** 66% of the people who responded to our e-mail survey have some college education, so nearly two-thirds of all Americans have some college education.

**Correct** Of the people who responded to our e-mail survey 66% have some college education, so nearly two-thirds of all Americans have some college education.

**Correct** (reworded) Sixty-six percent of the people who responded to our e-mail survey have some college education, so nearly two-thirds of all Americans have some college education.

**Incorrect** 70% of Madagascar's population live in extreme poverty and are mostly subsistence farmers.

**Correct** Of its Madagascar's population 70% live in extreme poverty and are mostly subsistence farmers.

**Correct** (spelled out) Seventy percent of its Madagascar's population live in extreme poverty and are mostly subsistence farmers.

**Guideline #2:** If your writing includes much numerical data, then spell out only single-digit numbers and use numerals for everything else.

**Purpose:** avoid confusion and improve the likelihood of better understanding.

**Original 1** This survey of 24 administrative districts over 3 years included 2575 participants.

**Preferred** This survey of 24 administrative districts over three years included 2575 participants.

**Original 2** The car hit the wall at 80 kph and skidded for 9 feet.

**Preferred** The car hit the wall at 80 kph and skidded for nine feet.

**Guideline #3:** When numbers are used in a series, generally Arabic numbers are used for all numbers regardless of Guideline #2.
**Guideline #4**: When two numbers are adjacent (next to each other), spell one out and leave the other as a numeral. However, always use numerals with units of measurement.

Incorrect 1 9 students of the group surveyed had studied French and 142 (students) had studied Spanish for three years or more.

Correct (rewomed) Of the group surveyed, 9 students had studied French and 142 had studied Spanish for three years or more.

("9" and "142" are part of a series; "three" is not part of the series, so it is spelled out according to Guideline #2.)

Original We analyzed 62 cases; of these, 59 had occurred in adult and three in children.

Preferred We analyzed 62 cases; of these, 59 had occurred in adults and 3 in children.

("3" is part of the series [59+3=62], so it is not spelled out according to Guideline #3.)

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**Guideline #5**: Leave 1 space after a number before a unit of measurement; 1 space before and after an equal "=" symbol and after the percent "%" symbol.

Incorrect 1 X=2 A+Y=3.2X

Correct X = 2 A + Y = 3.2X

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**Guideline #6**: Always use a “0” before the decimal point for numbers less than zero.

Incorrect 1 5m 32gm 520km P=0.05 .497 P =.05

Correct 1 5 m 32 gm 520 km P = 0.05 0.497 P = 0.05