

## **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 (reworded) ***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 (spelled out) ***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 (reworded) ***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.***

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**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.***

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**Guideline #3:** When numbers are used in a series, generally Arabic numbers are used for all numbers regardless of Guideline #2.

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

Correct  
(reworded)      ***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 #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      The sample was divided into 8 fifty-gram specimens.

Incorrect 2      The sample was divided into 8 50-gram specimens.

Correct  
(reworded)      ***The sample was divided into eight 50-gram specimens.***

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

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