



Demystifying Number Usage

In the business world, you can't escape numbers. You'll find them in new business proposals, in training manuals describing proper procedures and in all types of business reports.

Here's a quick summary to guide you on how and when to write a number as a word and when to use digits.

- The most basic guideline is to use words for numbers lower than 10. For numbers 10 and higher, use digits.
I have two sisters.
I've worked for the company for 17 years.
- It's best to avoid starting a sentence with a number. But when you must start a sentence with a number, spell out the number to make your writing flow better.
This fall, 8,400 children will begin kindergarten.
Eight thousand four hundred children will begin kindergarten this fall.
- When one number modifies another number, write one of the numbers and use numeral form for the other.
We need nine 8-foot posts for the fence.
We need 20 twelve-foot boards for the deck.
- Use digits for numbers with scientific or technical importance, including page or exhibit numbers, dates, measurements, time, sizes or money.
Since 2007, our revenue is up 4 percent.
See page 9 for last year's income statement.
We will meet at 1:00 p.m. on June 12.
- Remember to include the comma in numbers over 1,000. This can eliminate confusion and emphasizes the number itself.
- Finally, there's no reason to write a number as a word and figure such as *seven (7)*. This strategy dates back to when documents were all written by hand. These days it's repetitive and unnecessary.

If your training materials include lots of numbers and need updating, give me a call and I'll help you figure it all out.

Karen DeYoung is principal of DeYoung Consulting Services, which provides quality learning experiences for individuals and groups. We develop training materials and activities that advance individual, team, and organizational learning. Our work is done with integrity, reliability, and accountability.

DeYoung Consulting Services
Helping People Learn up to Their Potential
4834 Park Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55417
(612) 822-8872
(612) 220-3440 mobile
deyoung4@aol.com
www.deyoungconsultingservices.com