NUMBERS

Numbers and symbols in prose

Spell out numbers one to nine within body text, unless they are written as a percentage or accompany a symbol or a unit of measurement (such as a.m. or p.m., a distance or weight measurement, and so on). Numbers 10 and above, or in decimal point, should be in figures.

Spans of numbers: En dashes

Spans of numbers are separated by an en dash, a dash that is the width of an ‘n’ (slightly longer than a hyphen). An en dash is easily produced in a standard word processor.

Use an unspaced en dash (an en dash with no space on either side of it) when joining simple numbers:

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pages 128–36  6–9 p.m.  14–18 April
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But use a spaced en dash (an en dash with one space on either side) when joining complex entities:

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6 a.m. – 9 p.m.  5 April – 8 March  45 BC – 86 AD
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When a number is accompanied by a symbol or an abbreviated unit of measurement, the number should always be written as a figure. There should be no space between the number and its corresponding symbol, although there should be a space between the number and an abbreviated unit of measurement (except within tables):

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180°  5 p.  pp. 147–73
£347.00  18 mm  100 kph
8" x 10"  11 a.m.  300 dpi
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Write ‘per cent’ as two separate words, but ‘percentage’ as one. If the number is a percentage, write the number as a figure if it is over nine:

_There was a 19 per cent increase in productivity._

If a number starts a sentence, spell it out in full. For this reason, avoid starting a sentence with a long number.

In body text, use a comma (with no space after it) to aid readability of numbers over 9999. Do not use a comma with four-digit whole numbers. Where the number goes into tens or hundreds of thousands, insert a comma before the thousand. Where the number goes into the millions, write the amount in words and figures.

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3.142  1257  10,000  87,998  763,485  6 million  7.485 million  104 million
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