

Numbers in APA

Some people find sifting through the APA Manual (6th ed.) for rules about how to express numbers somewhat troublesome. Often, the question is asked, “Why can’t all these rules be placed in a table?”

This table shows the APA recommendations for numbers and numerals.

Description	Use Arabic numerals	Spell it out!
1. Numbers below 10		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One, two, three ... nine
2. Numbers 10 and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 cm wide clearly, 10% in the sample 30 years old 12th grade students 25th in rank 20 tables 150 females 	
3. Numbers in the <i>abstract</i> of a paper or in a <i>graphical display</i> within a paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... a small study comprising 4 individuals ... 	
4. Numbers immediately preceding a unit of measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a 12-inch ruler 158 cm in height a 250-mg tablet 	
5. Numbers representing mathematical or statistical functions, fractions or decimal quantities, percentages, ratios, percentiles and quartiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> divide by 3 3 times as many as ... 0.25 of the ... more than 40% of the sample a ratio of 3:1 the 95th percentile 	
6. Numbers representing time, dates, ages, scores, points on a scale, exact sums of money, and numerals as numerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 hr 35 min At 4.30 p.m. 8-year-olds scored 8 on a 10-point scale 	
7. Approximations of numbers of days, months and years		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> roughly three months later about eleven days ago six years ago or thereabouts
8. Numbers denoting a specific place in a numbered series, parts of books and tables, and each number in a list of four or more numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 5 Primary 3 Secondary 2 Part 3 Table 2 Row 8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... the fifth grade ...

Description	Use Arabic numerals	Spell it out!
9. Numbers that begin a sentence, title or text heading <i>NB Rerword the sentence to avoid beginning with a number</i>	<i>The results indicated that 20% of the sample showed some improvement, and 6% had none.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty percent of the sample showed some improvement; 6% showed none.
10. Common fractions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... one quarter of the class • ... two-thirds majority • ... two-tailed analysis
11. Universally accepted usage		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Twelve Apostles • the Five Principles of Pancasila
12. Combination of words and numerals to express numbers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large sums • When numbers appear back-to-back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 million dollars • 1.2 billion people • ... using two 4-point Likert scale measurements ... • ... comprising twenty 6-year-olds ... • ... analyzing 2 two-way interactions 	
13. Use words only where clarity and readability might be affected		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... first two sections
14. Ordinal Numbers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... third-order factor • ... the fifth graders • ... the second item in the 13th trial • ... the second and fourth teams
15. Cardinal base		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... three orders • ... four units • ... second item, 13 trials • ... one team, four teams
16. Roman numerals should be used if part of an established terminology		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type I error • Type II error
17. Arabic numerals for routine seriation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 5 	

Description	Use Arabic numerals	Spell it out!
18. Decimal fractions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the statistic exceeds 1 Where the statistic cannot be greater than 1 (correlations, proportions, levels of statistical significance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.45cm Cohen's $d = 0.70$ 0.44 s $r(32) = -.43, p = .022$ 	
19. Commas in numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1,000; 3,000,000 units 	
20. Numbers with groups of digits that do not require the comma include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> page numbers binary digits serial numbers degrees of temperature acoustic frequency designations degrees of freedom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> page 3015 0011001010 57834092 2015 °C 2500 Hz $F(24, 1000)$ 	
21. Plurals of numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1990s 20s and 30s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> threes and fours

Decimal places in reports of results of experiments and data analytic manipulations

Many people have problems with the number of decimal places when reporting data in academic papers and reports APA style. APA has some general rules.

Description	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Round off as much as possible keeping in mind statistical precision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> $\pi = 3.14159265$ should be rounded off to 3.14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer decimal digits are easier to understand – round off to two decimal places or rescale the measurement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.6784 m can be rescaled to 167.85cm

Description	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report correlations, proportions and inferential statistics to two decimals. E.g. t, F, and χ^2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> $t(54) = 5.43$ $F(2, 12) = 4.94$ $\chi^2 = 18.28$
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report p values to two or three decimal places, as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> $p = .034$
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For p values less than .001, report to three decimal places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> $p < .001$

References

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, D.C.: APA.