

1.35 Numbers and abbreviations

Numbers

1 *Ten or 10?*

1 – 10 are usually best written as full words (one, two , three etc). 11+ would be written as numbers. There's no strict rule on this: 11-20 may often also be written as words, but 21+ would almost always be put down as numbers. **Make sure you're consistent** over this: don't sometimes write twenty but in other places 20.

2 *Figures, table, section, chapter numbers*

Figure and table numbers and sections should be written as numbers: Figure 6.3; Table 4.2 etc.

Chapters numbers can be written as numbers or words, but again, **be consistent**.

3 *Page numbers*

Page numbers are usually on the right-hand side, top or bottom.

4 *Money*

The pound sign comes before the figure: £3.99, £100 etc. The same goes for dollars and euros. Always make clear what currency you're referring to.

Millions are often abbreviated to *m*. £3m = 3 million pounds. \$6.7m = 6.7 million dollars.

You may see thousands abbreviated to *k*, often when talking about salaries. A salary of £35k is £35,000 pounds a year.

5 *Large numbers*

1,000/1000 =	a thousand
10,000 =	ten thousand
100,000 =	one hundred thousand
1,000,000 =	a million
10,000,000 =	ten million
100,000,000 =	one hundred million

1,000,000,000 = a billion (one thousand million)

(In the UK, a billion used to be a million million, and some people may still interpret it as such).

6 Singular forms with plural meanings

After a number, dozen, hundred, thousand, million and billion do not add –s, and of is not used.

*six **hundred** people (but, *hundreds of pounds*)*

*two **thousand** cities (but, *thousands of cities*)*

*nine **million** years (but, *millions of years*)*

Singulars are also used as modifiers before nouns in plural expressions of measurement:

*a **twenty-pound** note*

*a **two-hour** exam*

*a **ten-kilometre** walk*

When using the old non-metric system to talk about height and weight, foot and stone often remain singular, particularly in more informal English:

*I'm five **foot** ten inches tall*

*I weigh twelve **stone** six pounds*

7 Decimals

We normally write decimals with a full stop, not a comma:

*0.75 (*nought point seven five*)*

*6.4 (*six point four*)*

*3.059 (*three point oh five nine*)*

A comma is used to separate thousands (see above).

8 Percentages

A percentage is considered as a plural:

60% of people **believe** that the government was wrong

9 Roman numerals

Although very rare in everyday life, Roman numerals are still fairly common in books and academic writing in general. They may be used for the first few pages of a long piece of work before the main body (Abstract, Acknowledgements etc), to number a list, for the names of kings and queens (*Henry VIII, Elizabeth II*), and sometimes for names of centuries (*a XVII century invention*). The BBC puts the year of copyright of its programmes in Roman numerals. Only use them if you're very familiar with them: it's not worth trying to use them for the sake of it.

10 Years

Years are never written with a comma: 1999 or 2003 etc. not 1,999 or 2,003

Abbreviations

1 Full stops

Full stops are not usually used with abbreviations nowadays. (They used to be, so you still might see it). So, just write:

Mr Popp

Doolittle & Dalley Ltd

20 kg

The same is true when the abbreviation is formed by the first letters of several words:

the BBC

the EU

NATO

2 Capital letters

Abbreviations such as UNESCO are usually written in capital letters. Recently, however, some of these (often referred to as *acronyms* if they form a word in themselves) are being written just with a capital first letter:

the Aids epidemic

If you're not sure, use capitals.

3 **Etc etc**

There are certain abbreviations which are commonly found in academic writing. Here is a list with meanings. Some may be considered a little informal; for example, etc, eg (write *for example*), ie (write *that is*):

etc	<i>and so on</i>
eg	<i>for example</i>
ie	<i>that is</i>
NB	<i>“note well”: used before important information to highlight it</i>
Viz.	<i>used to introduce a list of specific items or examples = namely</i>
op. cit.	<i>used in referencing, to refer to a source already mentioned</i>
loc.cit.	<i>in the place cited</i>
ibid	<i>used in referencing, to show that a source is the same as the one immediately preceding it</i>
c. or ca	<i>approximately (c.1650)</i>
cf.	<i>compare</i>
et al.	<i>“and the others”; used for in-text references when there are more than three authors</i>

4 **Style**

Apart from the examples above, and maybe some others connected to your specialist subject, you should not use abbreviations in your more formal writing.

Never use contractions (it’s, they’ll etc). Always write the full form.

Never use colloquial abbreviations such as uni, B’ham, info.

If you need to refer often to an organisation or a specialist term with a long name, for example *Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy* or the *National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children*, when you first make a reference you would normally put the name in full with the abbreviated form in brackets, and then subsequently just put the abbreviation.