

Saying & Writing Numbers

Warm-Up

Learning English isn't all about letters and words. You need to learn numbers, too! How high can you count in English? When is your birthday? What is your telephone number?



Dialogues

Read the dialogues, and practice with a partner. Then circle the number words. Try to figure out the difference between these three types of numbers.

A. Cardinal Numbers

- A: How many aunts do you have?
 B: I have two aunts on my mom's side and three on my dad's side. How many do you have?
 A: I only have one aunt. You have five aunts!
 B: Are you counting great-aunts? I also have three great-aunts.
 A: You have so many aunts! I don't have any great-aunts.
 B: I have a lot of aunts, but I only have one uncle—Uncle Bob.
 A: Does your uncle have any kids?
 B: Yes. He has six kids.
 A: I guess you have a lot of cousins, too!

B. Ordinal Numbers

- A: How was the race?
 B: Great. I came in third place.
 A: Congratulations! Who came in second place?
 B: My sister came in second place.
 A: Really? That's fantastic.
 B: Can you guess who came in first?
 A: Hmm, did your brother come in first?
 B: No, he came in 19th. My best friend came in first!
 A: Wow! What an exciting race.

C. Nominal Numbers

- A: I need some player information for our files. What number is on your hockey jersey?
 B: Number 17.
 A: Okay, and what's your zip code?
 B: 89097-3678.
 A: Thanks. Do you know your driver's license number?
 B: Let me check. It's 340980478. Do you need my social insurance number, too?
 A: No, but I do need your telephone number.
 B: I will give you my cell number. It's 319-789-8901.
 A: Thank you! Your file is up to date.

Types of Numbers

Now let's learn the difference between cardinal, ordinal, and nominal numbers. Practice saying these numbers out loud.

A. Cardinal Numbers

These are numbers that answer the question "How many?"

Ones

- zero (0)
- one (1)
- two (2)
- three (3)
- four (4)
- five (5)
- six (6)
- seven (7)
- eight (8)
- nine (9)

Tens

- ten (10)
- eleven (11)
- twelve (12)
- thirteen (13)
- fourteen (14)
- fifteen (15)
- sixteen (16)
- seventeen (17)
- eighteen (18)
- nineteen (19)

- twenty (20)
- twenty-one (21)
- twenty-two (22)
- thirty (30)
- forty (40)
- fifty (50)
- sixty (60)
- seventy (70)
- eighty (80)
- ninety (90)

Hundreds and Thousands

- one hundred / a hundred (100)
- one hundred and one (101)
- one hundred (and) ninety-nine (199)
- two hundred (200)
- one thousand (1,000)
- two thousand (and) twenty-five (2,025)
- one hundred thousand (100,000)
- nine hundred (and) ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred (and) ninety-nine (999,999)

Millions +

- one million (6 zeros)
- two million
- one billion (9 zeros)
- one trillion (12 zeros)

B. Ordinal Numbers

These numbers indicate a place or rank.

- first (1st)
- second (2nd)
- third (3rd)
- fourth (4th)
- fifth (5th)
- sixth (6th)
- seventh (7th)
- twentieth (20th)
- twenty-first (21st)
- thirtieth (30th)

Note:

Small text in words like "1st" is called *superscript*. These letters are sometimes removed in writing.

- one-hundredth (100th)
- one-hundred and first (101st)

C. Nominal Numbers

Nominal numbers are not used for counting purposes. They aren't used to describe a position or rank either. Nominal numbers are simply used for identification purposes. Here are some examples:

- telephone numbers
- numbers on race cars, horses, or athletes
- zip codes and postal codes
- license plate numbers
- address numbers
- numbers on ID cards, such as a driver's license, library card, or social insurance card

In spoken English, people often repeat these numbers to confirm that they are correct.

A: My phone number is 223-456-7890.

B: 223-456-7890?

A: That's correct.

A: My license plate number is 2238AB.

B: 2338AB?

A: No, **2238AB**. (*with emphasis on the incorrect #*)

Question and Response

A. Matching

Match the questions and answers, and practice them with a partner.

- | | | |
|-------|---|-----------------------------------|
| _____ | 1. How many eggs do you need? | a) I got 93%. |
| _____ | 2. What did you get on your science test? | b) She came in second place. |
| _____ | 3. When is the deadline? | c) Yes. This was my third try. |
| _____ | 4. What place did Elsa come in? | d) My essay is due in four weeks. |
| _____ | 5. Did you take the test before? | e) I need six for this recipe. |

B. Complete the Dialogues

Write example responses for the following questions. Be sure to use complete sentences. Practice your completed dialogues with a partner.

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | A: Did you come in second place? | B: _____ |
| 2. | A: How old is your best friend? | B: _____ |
| 3. | A: What is 15 + 15? | B: _____ |
| 4. | A: How much was the lottery prize? | B: _____ |
| 5. | A: What is your phone number? | B: _____ |

Fractions and Decimals

Fractions and decimals are used for numbers that are smaller than one. In spoken English, the word *point* is used to express a decimal. In writing, express fractions and decimals in the easiest form.

Fraction	Decimal	Words
$1/2$	0.5	half / a half / one-half
$1/3$	0.333	a third / one-third
$2/3$	0.666	two-thirds
$1/4$	0.25	one-quarter
$1 \frac{3}{4}$	1.75	one and three-quarters
$1/5$	0.2	one-fifth

- Her score was 87.4.
(eighty-seven point four)
- It costs \$4.55.
(four fifty-five OR four dollars and fifty-five cents)
- She ate half of the cake.
- I went around the block 1.5 times.
(one and a half)
- These totals are for the first quarter of the year.

Writing Guidelines

Numbers are easier in spoken English than in written English. There are many guidelines to learn for writing numbers in English.

1. Spell out numbers one to ten.
2. Use numerical figures for numbers 11 and up.
3. Use a comma for numbers over 1,000. Start at the end of a number and place a comma every third digit.
 - 1,102,039
4. Spell out a number if it's the first word in a sentence (or rewrite the sentence).
 - Twelve kids came to the party.
 - There were 12 kids at the party.
5. If a sentence has two numbers with different rules, spell out both (or write both numerically).
 - We only have two days left to write fifty-four cards.
6. Hyphenate numbers that act as adjectives (when they come before nouns), and remember that these adjectives should not be in plural form.
 - My ten-year-old child is deaf.
 - My child is ten years old.
7. If spelling out large numbers, hyphenate compound numbers.
 - My son is two and my daughter is twenty-two.
8. Spell fractions with hyphens. Any number over one-half is followed by a plural noun (unless it is part of only one thing).
 - About two-thirds of the students voted.
 - I ate three-quarters of the apple.
9. For money, use numerical figures with a dollar sign. If the amount can be expressed in a single word, refer to rules 1 and 2, and spell out *dollar(s)*.
 - The toy costs \$1.45.
 - I need five dollars.
 - Can I borrow 20 dollars?

Common Mistakes

A. Common Writing Mistakes

Can you improve these sentences?

Check the rules on pages 2 and 4, and rewrite the sentences.

1. 33 Chilean miners got out alive.

2. I have two male cousins and 11 female cousins.

3. My dog is three-years-old.

4. I ate two-third of my lunch.

5. The house went for two-hundred and fifty-four thousand dollars.

B. Common Speaking Mistakes

Here are some common speaking errors that English learners make with numbers. Can you find the problem in each sentence? Work with a partner and correct each sentence. Look back at pages 2 and 4 for help.

1. I have a six-years-old daughter.

2. He won three millions dollars.

3. I went to that school for one years.

4. We got a two-years car loan.

5. It costs two hundreds dollars.
