Numbers in English

The cardinal numbers (one, two, three, etc.) are adjectives referring to quantity, and the ordinal numbers (first, second, third, etc.) refer to distribution.

| **Number** | **Cardinal** | **Ordinal** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | one | first |
| 2 | two | second |
| 3 | three | third |
| 4 | four | fourth |
| 5 | five | fifth |
| 6 | six | sixth |
| 7 | seven | seventh |
| 8 | eight | eighth |
| 9 | nine | ninth |
| 10 | ten | tenth |
| 11 | eleven | eleventh |
| 12 | twelve | twelfth |
| 13 | thirteen | thirteenth |
| 14 | fourteen | fourteenth |
| 15 | fifteen | fifteenth |
| 16 | sixteen | sixteenth |
| 17 | seventeen | seventeenth |
| 18 | eighteen | eighteenth |
| 19 | nineteen | nineteenth |
| 20 | twenty | twentieth |
| 21 | twenty-one | twenty-first |
| 22 | twenty-two | twenty-second |
| 23 | twenty-three | twenty-third |
| 24 | twenty-four | twenty-fourth |
| 25 | twenty-five | twenty-fifth |
| 26 | twenty-six | twenty-sixth |
| 27 | twenty-seven | twenty-seventh |
| 28 | twenty-eight | twenty-eighth |
| 29 | twenty-nine | twenty-ninth |
| 30 | thirty | thirtieth |
| 31 | thirty-one | thirty-first |
| 40 | forty | fortieth |
| 50 | fifty | fiftieth |
| 60 | sixty | sixtieth |
| 70 | seventy | seventieth |
| 80 | eighty | eightieth |
| 90 | ninety | ninetieth |
| 100 | one hundred | hundredth |
| 500 | five hundred | five hundredth |
| 1,000 | one thousand | thousandth |
| 1,500 | one thousand five hundred, or fifteen hundred | one thousand five hundredth |
| 100,000 | one hundred thousand | hundred thousandth |
| 1,000,000 | one million | millionth |

Examples

* There are **twenty-five** people in the room.
* He was the **fourteenth** person to win the award.
* **Six hundred thousand** people were left homeless after the earthquake.
* I must have asked you **twenty** times to be quiet.
* He went to Israel for the **third** time this year.

Reading decimals

Read decimals aloud in English by pronouncing the decimal point as "point", then read each digit individually. Money is not read this way.

| **Written** | **Said** |
| --- | --- |
| 0.5 | point five |
| 0.25 | point two five |
| 0.73 | point seven three |
| 0.05 | point zero five |
| 0.6529 | point six five two nine |
| 2.95 | two point nine five |

Reading fractions

Read fractions using the cardinal number for the numerator and the ordinal number for the denominator, making the ordinal number plural if the numerator is larger than 1. This applies to all numbers except for the number 2, which is read "half" when it is the denominator, and "halves" if there is more than one.

| **Written** | **Said** |
| --- | --- |
| 1/3 | one third |
| 3/4 | three fourths |
| 5/6 | five sixths |
| 1/2 | one half |
| 3/2 | three halves |

Pronouncing percentages

Percentages are easy to read aloud in English. Just say the number and then add the word "percent".

| **Written** | **Pronounced** |
| --- | --- |
| 5% | five percent |
| 25% | twenty-five percent |
| 36.25% | thirty-six point two five percent |
| 100% | one hundred percent |
| 400% | four hundred percent |

Reading sums of money

To read a sum of money, first read the whole number, then add the currency name. If there is a decimal, follow with the decimal pronounced as a whole number, and if coinage has a name in the currency, add that word at the end. Note that normal decimals are not read in this way. These rules only apply to currency.

| **Written** | **Spoken** |
| --- | --- |
| 25$ | twenty-five dollars |
| 52€ | fifty-two euros |
| 140₤ | one hundred and forty pounds |
| $43.25 | forty-three dollars and twenty-five cents (shortened to "forty-three twenty-five" in everyday speech) |
| €12.66 | twelve euros sixty-six |
| ₤10.50 | ten pounds fifty |

Pronouncing measurements

Just read out the number, followed by the unit of measurement, which will often be abbreviated in the written form.

| **Written** | **Spoken** |
| --- | --- |
| 60m | sixty meters |
| 25km/h | twenty-five kilometers per hour |
| 11ft | eleven feet |
| 2L | two liters |
| 3tbsp | three tablespoons |
| 1tsp | one teaspoon |

Pronouncing Years

Reading years in English is relatively complicated. In general, when the year is a four digit number, read the first two digits as a whole number, then the second two digits as another whole number. There are a few exceptions to this rule. Years that are within the first 100 years of a new millenium can be read as whole numbers even though they have four digits, or they can be read as two two-digit numbers. Millennia are always read as whole numbers because they would be difficult to pronounce otherwise. New centuries are read as whole numbers of hundreds. We do not use the word "thousand", at least not for reading years within the past 1000 years.

Years that have just three digits can be read as a three digit number, or as a one digit number followed by a two-digit number. Years that are a two digit number are read as a whole number. You can precede any year by the words "the year" to make your meaning clear, and this is common for two and three digit years. Years before the year 0 are followed by BC, pronounced as two letters of the alphabet.

Interestingly, these rules apply to reading street addresses as well.

| **Written** | **Spoken** |
| --- | --- |
| 2014 | twenty fourteen or two thousand fourteen |
| 2008 | two thousand eight |
| 2000 | two thousand |
| 1944 | nineteen forty-four |
| 1908 | nineteen o eight |
| 1900 | nineteen hundred |
| 1600 | sixteen hundred |
| 1256 | twelve fifty-six |
| 1006 | ten o six |
| 866 | eight hundred sixty-six or eight sixty-six |
| 25 | twenty-five |
| 3000 BC | three thousand BC |
| 3250 BC | thirty two fifty BC |

How to say 0

There are several ways to pronounce the number 0, used in different contexts. Unfortunately, usage varies between different English-speaking countries. These pronunciations apply to American English.

| **Pronunciation** | **Usage** |
| --- | --- |
| zero | Used to read the number by itself, in reading decimals, percentages, and phone numbers, and in some fixed expressions. |
| o (the letter name) | Used to read years, addresses, times and temperatures |
| nil | Used to report sports scores |
| nought | Not used in the USA |

Examples

| **Written** | **Said** |
| --- | --- |
| 3.04+2.02=5.06 | Three point zero four plus two point zero two makes five point zero six. |
| There is a 0% chance of rain. | There is a zero percent chance of rain. |
| The temperature is -20⁰C. | The temperature is twenty degrees below zero. |
| You can reach me at 0171 390 1062. | You can reach me at zero one seven one, three nine zero, one zero six two |
| I live at 4604 Smith Street. | I live at forty-six o four Smith Street |
| He became king in 1409. | He became king in fourteen o nine. |
| I waited until 4:05. | I waited until four o five. |
| The score was 4-0. | The score was four nil. |