Cardinal and ordinal numbers in English

1. The numbers in English

1.1. Cardinal numbers

Cardinal numbers say how many people or things there are.

Examples:

- There are **five** books on the desk.
- Ron is **ten** years old.

1.1.1. Numbers bigger than 20

Use a **hyphen** between compound numbers.

Number	Word
21	**twenty**-**one**
55	**fifty**-**five**
99	**ninety**-**nine**

1.1.2. Numbers bigger than 100

Use a **hyphen** between compound numbers and the word **and**.

Use either the definite article **a** or **one** for 100.

Number	Word

Number	Word
121	a/one hundred and twenty-one
356	three hundred and fifty-six
999	nine hundred and ninety-nine

1.1.3.Numbers bigger than 1,000

Use a **hyphen** between compound numbers and the word **and**.

Use either the definite article **a** or **one** for 1,000.

Separate three digits with a comma (**,**) → 50,000.

Number	Word
1,121	a/one thousand one hundred and twenty-one
2,356	two thousand three hundred and fifty-six
9,999	nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine

1.1.4. The number 0

There are different words for the number 0.

Word	Explanation	Example
oh	single digits (telephone numbers, codes)	67890 six - seven - eight - nine - *oh*
zero	measurements (temperature)	-5 °C five degrees Celsius below *zero*
nought	figure 0 in British English*	5 - 5 = 0 Five minus five leaves *nought*.
nil	results in sport	The match ended 2 - 0. The match ended two - *nil*.

Word	Explanation	Example
love	tennis	40 - 0 forty - *love*

* In American English *zero* is used.

1.1.5. Year

see: [The date and the year in English](#)

1.2. Ordinal numbers

Add **th** to the cardinal number to form the ordinal number: six → six**th**

Add **the last two letters of the written word** to the figure. → 4**th**

Numbers in words: The ordinal numbers 1**st** → fir**st**, 2**nd** → seco**nd** and 3**rd** → thi**rd** are irregular. Be careful with the spelling of the words for 5**th**, 8**th**, 9**th**, 12**th** and the words ending in **-y**.

Cardinal numbers		Ordinal numbers	
1	one	1**st**	fir**st**
2	two	2**nd**	seco**nd**
3	three	3**rd**	thi**rd**
5	five	5**th**	fif**th**
8	eight	8**th**	eigh**th**
9	nine	9**th**	nin**th**
12	twelve	12**th**	twelf**th**
20	twenty	20**th**	twentie**th**

Ordinal numbers	
21**st**	twenty-fir**st**

Ordinal numbers

22**nd**	twenty-seco**nd**
23**rd**	twenty-thi**rd**
24**th**	twenty-four**th**
25**th**	twenty-fif**th**
26**th**	twenty-six**th**
27**th**	twenty-seven**th**
28**th**	twenty-eigh**th**
29**th**	twenty-nin**th**
30**th**	thirtie**th**
31**st**	thirty-fir**st**

1.3. Fractions and decimals

1.3.1. Fractions

Use the **ordinal number** for the **denominator**:

- 1/3 → one **third**

- 2 3/5 → two and three **fifths**

Exceptions:

- 1/2 → one half

- 1/4 → one quarter

1.3.2. Decimals

Use the **cardinal number** for decimals:

- 3.8 → three point **eight**

- 4.25 → four point **two five**

1.4. Roman numbers

Roman numbers are seldom used. They are used for the names of kings and queens. Use the ordinal number:

- Elisabeth II → Elisabeth the Second
- Louis XIV → Louis the Fourteenth

2. The numbers in a table

Cardinal numbers		Ordinal numbers	
0	oh, zero, nil, love, nought	---	
1	one	1**st**	fir**st**
2	two	2**nd**	seco**nd**
3	three	3**rd**	thi**rd**
4	four	4**th**	fou**rth**
5	five	5**th**	fif**th**
6	six	6**th**	six**th**
7	seven	7**th**	seven**th**
8	eight	8**th**	eigh**th**
9	nine	9**th**	nin**th**
10	ten	10**th**	ten**th**
11	eleven	11**th**	eleven**th**
12	twelve	12**th**	twelf**th**
13	thirteen	13**th**	thirteen**th**
14	fourteen	14**th**	fourteen**th**
15	fifteen	15**th**	fifteen**th**
16	sixteen	16**th**	sixteen**th**
17	seventeen	17**th**	seventeen**th**

Cardinal numbers		Ordinal numbers	
18	eighteen	18**th**	eighteen**th**
19	nineteen	19**th**	nineteen**th**
20	twenty	20**th**	twentie**th**
21	twenty-one	21**st**	twenty-fir**st**
22	twenty-two	22**nd**	twenty-seco**nd**
23	twenty-three	23**rd**	twenty-thi**rd**
24	twenty-four	24**th**	twenty-four**th**
25	twenty-five	25**th**	twenty-fif**th**
26	twenty-six	26**th**	twenty-six**th**
27	twenty-seven	27**th**	twenty-seven**th**
28	twenty-eight	28**th**	twenty-eigh**th**
29	twenty-nine	29**th**	twenty-nin**th**
30	thirty	30**th**	thirtie**th**
31	thirty-one	31**st**	thirty-fir**st**
40	forty		
50	fifty		
60	sixty		
70	seventy		
80	eighty		
90	ninety		
100	a/one hundred		
1,000	a/one thousand		
10,000	ten thousand		
100,000	a/one hundred thousand		

Cardinal numbers		Ordinal numbers	
1,000,000	a/one million		
1,000,000,000	a/one billion		

Explanation

[Numbers](#)

[The date in English – Writing and Spelling](#)

Exercises

[Exercises – Numbers](#)

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