

Number Nine... Number Nine...

Happy New Year! Now that the holidays are a distant memory and everyone is counting down the days until next December, we thought we'd shed some light on the proper use of numbers in general business writing.

What's Up at KB COMM?

At KB COMM, we provide mission-critical communication and learning services to clients in a variety of industries. Thanks to our established and new clients for keeping us busy. Recent and ongoing projects include:

- Writing and editing numerous information products for a healthcare diagnostics manufacturer, including communications to employees from the CEO and executive leadership team, customer presentations and letters, product marketing brochures and data sheets, and training materials
- Formatting and revising periodically reviewed manufacturing standard operating procedures and work instructions for a pharmaceutical company
- Writing manufacturing reports for a pharmaceutical company
- Drafting CMC modules for electronic submission to health authorities on behalf of a pharmaceutical company
- Reviewing and editing for consistency and accuracy response documents and associated modules for electronic submission to health authorities on behalf of pharmaceutical companies

KB COMM LLC is a certified Women's Business Enterprise. We are officially qualified to participate in corporations' woman- and minority-owned vendor programs.

Please keep us in mind for your communication or training projects.

Tips and Tales

It's a Numbers Game

Well, to be precise, it's a numerals game. A numeral is a figure (10), letter (X), word (ten), or group of words expressing a number. So how do you know which form to use? Here are a few basic tips.

Roman numerals use the letters *I, V, X, L, C, D, and M*. Use Roman numerals for wars and to show personal sequence for animals and people: *World War II, Native Dancer II, King George VI*. (Or, if you are a fan of Trout Fishing in America, to count the wheels on the big rig.)

Arabic numerals use the figures *1* through *9* plus *0*. Use Arabic forms unless Roman numerals are required.

The figures *1, 2, 3*, etc., and the corresponding words—*one, two, three*, etc.—are called cardinal numbers. The figures *1st, 2nd, 3rd*, etc., and the corresponding words—*first, second, third*, etc.—are called ordinal numbers.

Note: Do not superscript the letters in ordinal figures. If you use Microsoft Word as your word processor, you've probably noticed that it superscripts letters in ordinal figures by default. Here's how to change this default: Click File, Options, Proofing. Click the AutoCorrect Options button and select the *AutoFormat As You Type* tab. Under "Replace as you type," deselect the *Ordinals (1st) with Superscript* check box. Then click OK.

You should spell out cardinal numbers one through nine. Use figures starting with 10. For ordinals, spell out *first* through *ninth* when they indicate sequence in time or location (*first base, Second Amendment, third in line*). Use figures starting with *10th*. However, use *1st, 2nd, 3rd*, etc., when the sequence has been assigned in creating names. This mainly applies to geographic, military, and political designations, such as *1st Ward, 7th Fleet, and 1st Sergeant*.

In general, you should spell out a number that begins a sentence (*Ten years ago...* rather than *10 years ago...*). Dates are the exception (*1976 was an election year...*).

For nonscientific writing, use commas to divide four-, five-, and six-digit numbers (1,000; 25,314; 300,989). Beginning with 1 million, use a combination of numbers and words (*2.6 million, 13 billion*, etc.).

Please be aware that technical and scientific writing have their own conventions to ensure precision, and there are plenty of other rules regarding numerals that we haven't mentioned here (see our July 2012 issue for a few more). But these tips will serve you well in most business-writing situations. If your company has a style guide, refer to it often. The rules above may be contradicted in your style guide. And that makes writing all the more fun!

And please remember, *when it has to be right*, KB COMM is here to help.

Sincerely,

Kathy

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KB COMM

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