

Numbers

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Overview of number formatting

- Numbers and ordered events less than 10 in full should be written as words, not numerals (see [examples](#)), although there are some [exceptions](#).
- Numbers with two or more digits should be written as numerals unless they are at the start of a sentence (see [examples](#)).
- Numbers between 1000 and 9999 should contain no punctuation.
- [Numbers with five or more digits](#) should include commas (not decimal points or full stops).
- Use 'from' and 'to' instead of a dash to describe a [range of numbers](#) in text. Numbers written out in full should be [hyphenated appropriately](#).
- Often, judgement is needed to determine the best presentation for a set of numbers.

Examples of number formatting

Correct	Incorrect
We sent the review to four referees.	We sent the review to 4 referees.
The 10 participants agreed.	The ten participants agreed.
The 25 studies are available.	The twenty-five studies are available.
Thirty-three adults and five children participated.	33 adults and 5 children participated.
Ninth	9th
112th	one hundred and twelfth

Exceptions to basic rule for numbers and ordered events less than 10

Exception	Guidance	Example
Sentence contains numbers < 10 and ≥ 10	Acceptable to use only numerals	from 2 to 12 years from 5% to 25% of the number of participants There were between 9 and 15 people in the room.
Equations, numerical results, statistics	Numerals only	2/20 OR 1.06 (95% CI 0.90 to 3.02; 6 trials, 1500 participants) (3.1% at 6 months versus 4.7% at 5 months)
Sentence starts with a number	Spell number	Eleven per cent of people ... Twenty authors attended the workshop. Eight separate doses are described.
Number with a unit	Always use numerals	8 mg 25 mL 6 s

Exception	Guidance	Example
		0.7 kg
Tables (see also: Tables in Cochrane Reviews)	Numerals for all numbers including those < 10	—
Description of a measurement scale	Acceptable to include numeral	Outcomes were evaluated using the 9-point ORBIT classification.

Numbers with five or more digits

Note: this is an exception to the style convention for SI units; see [Units and systems of measurement](#).

Correct	Incorrect
7677	7,677
10,000	10000
12,100	12.100

Ranges of numbers

Correct	Incorrect
from three to nine participants	from three - nine participants
-12 to -4	-12 - -4
The risk ratio was 0.38 (95% CI 0.30 to 0.49)	The risk ratio was 0.38 (95% CI 0.30-0.49)
(MD -11.50 h, 95% CI -20.04 to -2.18)	(MD -11.50 h, 95% CI -20.04 - -2.18)
1% to 10%	1%-10%
4 mg to 5 mg	4-5 mg, or 4 to 5 mg

Number hyphenation

Rule	Correct	Incorrect
Hyphenate compound numbers from twenty-one through to ninety-nine	ninety-seven one hundred and forty-two forty-three thousand and eighty-three	ninety seven one-hundred-and-forty-two one hundred and forty two forty three thousand and eighty-three forty three thousand and eighty three
Hyphenate written-out fractions	two-thirds two-fifths	two thirds two-third two fifths two-fifth

Large numbers

Use '6.1 million' rather than '6,100,000'

Avoid 'billion' and 'trillion', due to ambiguity about their value. If they are used, they should be explained in terms of millions (e.g. '6 billion (6000 million)')

