

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

Number	Cardinal	Ordinal
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

3.04+2.02=5.06

There is a 0% chance of rain.

The temperature is -200C.

You can reach me at 0171 390 1062.

I live at 4604 Smith Street.

He became king in 1409.

I waited until 4:05.

The score was 4-0.

Said

Three point zero four plus two point zero two makes five point zero six.

There is a zero percent chance of rain.

The temperature is twenty degrees below zero.

You can reach me at zero one seven one, three nine zero, one zero six two

I live at forty-six o four Smith Street

He became king in fourteen o nine.

I waited until four o five.

The score was four nil.

Telling the time



2:00 - It's two **o'clock**.
 2:05 - It's five **past** two.
 2:10 - It's ten **past** two.
 2:15 - It's quarter **past** two.
 2:20 - It's twenty **past** two.
 2:25 - It's twenty-five **past** two.

2:30 - It's half **past** two.
 2:35 - It's twenty-five **to** three.
 2:40 - It's twenty **to** three.
 2:45 - It's quarter **to** three.
 2:50 - It's ten **to** three.
 2:55 - It's five **to** three.

We use AT + TIME when giving the time of a specific event.

- The class starts at nine o'clock.
- The flight leaves at ten to three.

We use IT IS or IT'S to answer a question that asks for the time right now.

- What time is it? - It is half past four.
 What's the time? - It's twenty to five.

There are two common ways of telling the time.

1) Say the hour first and then the minutes. (Hour + Minutes)

- 6:25 - It's six twenty-five
- 8:05 - It's eight O-five (the O is said like the letter O)
- 9:11 - It's nine eleven
- 2:34 - It's two thirty-four

2) Say the minutes first and then the hour. (Minutes + PAST / TO + Hour)

For minutes 1-30 we use **PAST** after the minutes.

For minutes 31-59 we use **TO** after the minutes.

- 2:35 - It's twenty-five **to** three
- 11:20 - It's twenty **past** eleven
- 4:18 - It's eighteen **past** four
- 8:51 - It's nine **to** nine
- 2:59 - It's one **to** three

When it is **15 minutes past** the hour we normally say: **(a) quarter past**

- 7:15 - It's (a) quarter past seven

When it is **15 minutes before** the hour we normally say: **a quarter to**

- 12:45 - It's (a) quarter to one

When it is **30 minutes past** the hour we normally say: **half past**

- 3:30 - It's half past three (but we can also say three-thirty)

O'clock

We use **o'clock** when there are NO minutes.

- 10:00 - It's ten o'clock
- 5:00 - It's five o'clock
- 1:00 - It's one o'clock

Sometimes it is written as 9 o'clock (the number + o'clock)

12:00

For 12:00 there are four expressions in English.

- twelve o'clock
- midday = noon

- midnight

Asking for the Time

The common question forms we use to ask for the time *right now* are:

- What time is it?
- What is the time?

A more polite way to ask for the time, especially from a stranger is:

- Could you tell me the time please?

The common question forms we use to ask at what time a specific event will happen are:

What time...?

When...?

- What time does the flight to New York leave?
- When does the bus arrive from London?
- When does the concert begin?

Giving the Time

We use **It is** or **It's** to respond to the questions that ask for the time *right now*.

- **It is** half past five (5:30).
- **It's** ten to twelve (11:50)

We use the structure **AT + time** when giving the time of a specific event.

- The bus arrives **at** midday (12:00).
- The flight leaves **at** a quarter to two (1:45).
- The concert begins **at** ten o'clock. (10:00)

We can also use subject pronouns in these responses.

- It arrives at midday (12:00).
- It leaves at a quarter to two (1:45).
- It begins at ten o'clock. (10:00)

AM vs. PM

We don't normally use the 24-hour clock in English.

We use **a.m.** (am) for the morning and **p.m.** (pm) for the afternoon and night.

3am = Three o'clock in the morning.

3pm = Three o'clock in the afternoon.

Tips for telling the time properly in English



Telling the time in English is more complicated than just reading some numbers from the clock. We have lots of expressions and phrases related to telling the time that you need to know if you want to talk about time accurately in English. Make sure you can tell the time properly in English with these five simple tips.

Choose which clock to use

There are two ways of telling the time in English – the 12-hour clock and the 24-hour clock. In the 24-hour clock, we use the numbers from 0 – 23 to indicate the hours. In the 12-hour clock, we use 1 – 12. To tell the difference between morning and afternoon, we use ‘am’ after the time in the morning and ‘pm’ after the time in the afternoon. Remember, ‘pm’ starts at 12:00 near lunchtime.

Only use o'clock up to 12

We only use 'o'clock' for precise hours. You can say 'eight o'clock' at 08:00 but not at 08:01. We only use 'o'clock' when we are telling time using the 12-hour clock so English speakers would never say '13 o'clock'.

We only have a 'half past, never a 'half to'.

Unlike many other languages, in English we use 'half past' to talk about any time ending in **' :30'**. After that we start looking forward and use 'to'. So, 6:30 is 'half past six' and 6:31 is 29 minutes to seven. We also only use 'half past' with the 12-hour clock.

Use 'quarter' for 15 minutes before or after the hour



At X:15 and X:45, we can use the expressions 'quarter past' and 'quarter to'. Using these expressions sounds much more natural to a native speaker than 'fifteen minutes past' or 'fifteen minutes to'. As with 'half past' we can only use these with the 12-hour clock.

Use 'at' for specific times and 'in' for periods of time

We use 'at' to talk about any specific time. For example "I'll meet you at six pm." Special specific times of the day and night have their own names in English, we use 'at' with these, to. 'Midday', 'midnight', 'dawn' and 'dusk' all need 'at' before them. However, if we are talking about a period of the day, we use 'in'. So, we would say "in the morning", "in the afternoon", "in the evening", or "in the night". There is one exception to this rule in that we can also say "at night".

The DATE in English

There are two ways of saying the date in English.

	Written English	Spoken English	Numbers
	March 7 MONTH + DAY	March seventh Even if the <i>-th</i> isn't written, an ordinal number is still said.	3 / 7 / 17 MONTH / DAY / YEAR
	7th March DAY + MONTH	The seventh of March	7 / 3 / 17 DAY / MONTH / YEAR

Days	Months	Years
We always use ordinal numbers for the date in spoken English.	Months always start with capital letters.	Years are normally divided into two parts.*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st first 2nd second 3rd third 4th fourth 5th fifth 6th sixth 7th seventh 8th eighth 9th ninth 10th tenth 	<p><u>a</u>ugust ❌ <u>A</u>ugust ✅</p> <p>What day is this?</p> <p>3 / 5 / 18</p> <p> March 5, 2018</p> <p> 3rd May 2018</p> <p>Big difference!</p>	<p>1984 nineteen eighty-four</p> <p>1652 sixteen fifty-two 1941 nineteen forty-one 2017 twenty seventeen</p> <p>* Exception: For the years from 2000 to 2010, we normally say <i>two thousand and + number</i>.</p> <p>2006 two thousand and six</p>

How to ask which day of the week

If you want to ask what day of the week it is, say:

What day is it today? or *What's the day today?*

What day is it tomorrow? or *What's the day tomorrow?*

To answer these questions you can say,

It's Monday today. or Today is Monday.

It's Tuesday tomorrow. or Tomorrow is Tuesday.

How to ask the date

If you want to ask what the date is, you can say:

What's the date today? or What's today's date?

What's the date tomorrow? or What's tomorrow's date?

You can answer by saying:

It's 27th September. / Today is 27th September.

Tomorrow is September 28th.

How to say the date

When we say dates in English we use ordinal numbers. So for 1 January, we don't say the cardinal number 'one' but we say 'first'. And we say 'the' before the number followed by 'of'. For example,

It's the first of January.

It's also possible to invert the month and day. For example,

It's January first.

In this case you don't need to say 'the' and 'of'.

From 13 to 19 we continue to add -th to create the ordinal numbers (thirteenth, fourteenth, etc.)

While from 21 to 31 the ordinal numbers end according to the ending of the second number. For example,

21 – twenty-first

22 – twenty-second

23 – twenty-third

24 – twenty-fourth

How to write the date

When we write a date we don't need to add 'the' and 'of' as we do when we speak. For example:

It's the first of January – speaking

It's 1st January – writing

As you can see, you don't need to write the number but we usually add the last two letters of the ordinal number. For example:

First – 1st

Second – 2nd

Third – 3rd

Fourth – 4th

How to say the year

There are two ways to say the year in English. Until the year 2000, every year was pronounced as two numbers. For example,

1485 – *fourteen eighty-five*

1750 – *seventeen fifty*

1900 – *nineteen hundred*

For the first years of previous centuries, we add '0'. For example:

1801 – *eighteen o one*

While for the first ten years of the 21st century, we use the word 'thousand'. For example:

2000 – *two thousand*

2006 – *two thousand six*

From the year 2010 onwards you can say two numbers again. For example,

2012 – *twenty twelve*

However, some people continue to use ‘thousand’ and say:

2012 – *two thousand twelve*

Centuries

When we refer to a century in English, we use ordinal numbers. For example,

1800-1900 = *the nineteenth century*

1900-2000 = *the twentieth century*

And centuries are divided into ten *decades*. A decade is a period of ten years.

Historical dates

When you talk about a year in the distant past, you can use B.C. and A.D. The letters B.C. mean ‘before Christ’. For example,

The first Olympic Games were in 776 B.C.

A.D. means ‘Anno Domini’ – the year of the Lord, marking the birth of Christ. So this year is 2019 A.D. However, it’s only necessary to add A.D. when it is unclear which time period you’re referring to. For example,

Romulus Augustulus was the last Roman Emperor from 475-476 A.D.