

CHAPTER 7 THE USE OF NUMBERS

Sometimes, a book suffers, to a certain degree, when numbers are written in any which way, not in a standardised fashion. While the editor wishes to stick to the norms, he/she has to accept certain exceptions to the rule.

This chapter provides some guidelines pertaining to the use of numbers, especially in case of deciding whether a number should be written in figure or in words.

There are several considerations to be taken into account when numbers are involved in a text. Among others, whether it is a big or small number, whether it is exact or just an estimation, and whether it is a text in the sciences or social sciences.

Figures or Words

In the UMP's style, the following numbers have to be in words:

- a. All numbers from one to nine

In the accident, three people were killed.
Only one ton of flour is needed to make the cake.

- b. All numbers from ten onwards.

The population of Selangor will be five million by the year 2020.
The publisher printed only 3,000 copies of the book.

- c. All numbers from one to nine, indicating position.

He was placed no seventh in the race.

These circumstances require all numbers to be in figures:

- a. All number bigger than nine and all numbers except mentioned above.

In that accident 301 people were killed
11 tons of flour were needed to prepare the cake.

- b. All number bigger than nine, indication position

Malaysia occupy 35th position at the Barcelona Games.

- c. In case of consecutive numbers, the number has to be in figure even though it is smaller than nine.

The neighbourhood consist of 24 blocks of single-storey terrace houses, 15 blocks of double-storey link, and 6 blocks of semi-detached houses.

In case of a sentence that begins with a number, the number has to be in words.

Seven thousands eight hundred and fifty students were offered places this year.
Two hundred and nine people were killed in the accident.

In case where the editor feels that such usage is not practical, he/she can amend such:

In the accident, 209 people were killed.
This year, 7850 people were offered places.

Exception to the Rule

Usage in science. In mathematics, technical and scientific fields all numbers are to be in figures, if it causes confusion to the readers.

3 kg
340 g
2 km
100 m
10 pica
8/9 points

Ordinary usage. In ordinary, non-technical usage all numbers have to be treated in the style that has been explained earlier.

The temperature in the room increased to ten degree within five minutes.
Some students walked six kilometres to school.

Fraction. To avoid confusion, figures have to be used in dealing with fraction.

8.5 X 11 inch
6.5 miles
75 ½ feet
3 ¾ yards

Abbreviation. When abbreviation appears following a number, then the number has to be in figures

55mm
7km
7V
55 mph

Symbols. If a symbol is used, the number has to be written in words. If there are two or more quantities, the same symbol have to be repeated.

3½”
36
3” X 5”
20 – 50

Percentages

Percentage and decimals have to be in figure, whether in sciences or social sciences.

Grade 3.8 is equivalent to 95.
For evaluation purpose, B is equivalent to 3.45 marks.

Percentage. In the sciences symbol % is used, but in the social sciences the symbol has to be written in words.

560 is equivalent to 10% of the total population
Literacy rate in Malaysia has increased to 93 percent.

Decimal point. In the sciences, decimal point that is less than 1.00, it begins with zero.

Rate of 0.85
Ratio of 0.43

Zero is dropped in the social sciences.

Currencies

The editor has to ascertain that all references to currency has to be in Malaysian denomination. In case of the writer expressing it in other currency, its equivalent in RM has to be calculated, based on the rate that was prevailing in the period referred to. The symbol RM has to be used on all occasions.

All complete value one to nine and the big number of hundred, thousand, million and billion have to be in words.

He is paid only five ringgit a day.
The government set aside RM70 million for the poor.

In cases involving a fraction of a RM, it has to be in figures, unless it is at the beginning of a sentence.

He owes the boy RM3.75.
Three ringgit and seventy-five sen is need to pay for the ice-cream.

In the event that the editor is not comfortable with such a form, he can amend the sentence to read:

To buy ice-cream, he needs RM3.75

Sections of the Book

All the numbers which refer to sections, chapters, pages, illustrations, tables, etc of the book, and editions of magazines have to be set in figures. Except for preliminary pages which are set using roman characters, books by UMP are set in arab characters.

Preface is on page iv, and its appendix is on page 125.

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3rd edition

Dates

Numbers used to denote year varies according to:

- a. **Year only.** Denote year in figure only, the word year need not be mentioned. Use B.C. for before Christ. A.D need not be used to denote after Christ.

The Chinese started to produce paper in 200 B. C.
Malaysia gained independence in 1957.

- b. **Year abbreviated.** Figures in the year to indicate century can be dropped in order to create abbreviation for the year. however, this is permissible only under special circumstances, like a specific event.

Semangat '46 gave birth to UMNO.

- c. **Dates.** UMP's style requires that dates have to follow date-month-year sequence without punctuation marks.

16 June 1965
31 August 1957
Malaysia was formed on 16 September 1963.

- d. **Decade.** Suffixes can be used to denote the era of a decade. In case where no century is mentioned, then it should be wholly in words.

Era of the 60's
The twenties
If the century is mentioned, it should be in figures
1960's
1920's

In certain situation, particularly in the preparation of notes and bibliography, it is permissible to use **short-forms to indicate months of the year**. the standard form is as follows:

Jan - January
Feb - February
Mar - March
Apr - April
Jun - June
Jul - July
Aug - August
Sep - September
Oct - October
Nov - November
Dec – December

Time

Time all the time has to be in words.

The meeting will commence at half past two.
They take dinner at quarter to eight.

However, figures can also be used to emphasize the exact time.

TV3 commences service at 6:00 in the morning.
The plane departs at 3:00 in the afternoon.

For more precision, indication should be made whether it is morning, midday, afternoon or evening. UMP's style does not use A.M. or P.M to indicate the time.

If the 24-hour cycle is to be used, no punctuation mark is required to separate hour from the minute.

The plane departs at 1435.
They arrived in London at 0125.

Names

Name of kings. All numbers that appear after the name of kings or emperors should be in roman character and in capital letter.

Elizabeth III
Henry XIV
Sultan Ibrahim II
Sultan Muhammad IV

Brand names. Roman characters should be used to refer to specific names for such as aeroplanes, car models, ships etc.

Apollo II
Bluebird III

Organisations

Government. All numbers that refer to name of government, government agency or ceremony has to be in words.

Political division. All numbers which refer to place names or political division has to at all time in words.

Sarawak's Third Division
Fourth zone

Names of units in the army. As in the above, all numbers bigger than nine that refer to the army has be in words.

145th Battalion
77th Regiment
2nd Infantry

Addresses

Street names. All street names need to written in arab characters.

Jalan 122
Jalan 2/54

Name od buildings and places. Name of places or buildings has to be in arabic numerals and no abbreviation.

1221, Jalan 33/5, Subang Jaya.
25, Jalan Seladang, Kuantan.

Post code. All post code numbers need to be written in arab characters.

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