

WRITING FAQ's

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the rules for spelling out and writing numbers in my papers?

- Spell out common numbers under 10.
- Use numerals to write numbers 10 and above.
- Spell out all numbers at the beginning of sentences (Thirty cities were represented...).
- Add "s" with no apostrophe to make plurals out of numbers (the 1830s).
- Use combinations of numbers and number words for large approximate sums (over 2 billion people).
- Ordinal numbers follow the same rules as other numbers. Spell out ordinal numbers below 10 (fifth, seventh). Use numerals for ordinal numbers 10 and above (11th, 50th).
- Use numerals for all numbers that represent time, dates, ages, population size, exact sums of money, scores and points.

Can I use the "&" sign and other symbols in my writing?

The "&" symbol should only be used when citing or referencing a title (where the symbol is used) or multiple authors. The "&" symbol is also permitted when it is used in text that you are quoting. The use of symbols should be minimal.

Should I use "I"?

In many cases, using the first person pronoun can improve your writing, by offering the following benefits:

- Clarity: Because trying to avoid the first person can lead to awkward constructions and vagueness, using the first person can improve your writing style.
- Positioning yourself in the essay: In some projects, you need to explain how your research or ideas build on or depart from the work of others, in which case you'll need to say "I," "we," "my," or "our"; if you wish to claim some kind of authority on the topic, first person may help you do so.

Should I use gender-sensitive language in my writing?

Gender sensitivity is when the writer uses nouns or pronouns that are not specific to either the male or female gender. English speakers and writers have traditionally been taught to use masculine nouns and pronouns in situations where the gender of their subject(s) is unclear, or when a group to which they are referring contains members of both genders. It is fine to continue with this norm and write in the masculine when necessary.

