Using numbers and units

Units

Use standard metric units.

In nontechnical publications, spell out the units at first mention. For more technical publications, there is no need to spell out units such as kg, t or m.

Numerals

Use arabic numerals to express all quantities, including periods of time (e.g. days, years), except at the beginning of a sentence:

> 6 chairs   5 years

> Five years ago

Use *one* for a figure of speech, when the meaning is 'a' rather than a number connected to a unit of measure or to a value:

> She had one good reason for being cautious. [a good reason]

> Here was one alternative. [an alternative]

but

> 1 or more words [1 word]

> 1 of 4 species

If the client's preference is to use a combination of numerals and words, spell out numbers from one to nine, and use arabic numerals for numbers 10 and above, including ordinal numbers. One exception is series of numbers containing both numbers of 10 or more and numbers less than 10 – use numerals for all:

> Sample A took 6 days whereas sample B took 11 days.

not

> Sample A took six days whereas sample B took 11 days.

Use arabic numerals for all percentage figures, followed by either the % symbol with no space or *per cent*; which you choose depends on the client's preference and the nature of the document:

> 5%   or   5 per cent

Between and *from*

When a span of numbers is preceded by the word *between*, the numbers should be separated by the word *and*:

> between 1994 and 1996   not   between 1994–96

> between 5 and 7 kg   not   between 5–7 kg

When a span of numbers is preceded by the word *from*, the numbers should be separated by the word *to*:

> from 1994 to 1995   not   from 1994–95

Formatting

Always have a nonbreaking space (Shift+Ctrl+Space on if using Windows) between the number and the unit:

> 7 kg   not   7kg

Use a slash to indicate *per*:

> 5 t/ha   7 kg/m^2

Use en dashes (Alt+0150 on numeric keypad, or Ctrl+- on numeric keypad), not hyphens or slashes, for spans of numbers:

> 5–7 t/ha   not   5-7 t/ha

> 1994–95   not   1994/95   or   1994-95

Miscellaneous

Use a hyphen when a number is used adjectivally if the unit is spelled out in full:

> 5-hectare area

For all dates, use the form:

> Wednesday 1 July 2000

For large numbers (more than 3 digits), show thousands with a comma:

> 1,000   100,000