

How to read ALL NUMBERS in English: Study Guide

Numbers are an essential part of our daily lives and understanding them in English will boost your confidence and accuracy. This guide covers various types of numbers and how to read them correctly in English.

Table of Contents

Please look over the Table of Contents to familiarise yourself with this study guide. You can also jump to any section you'd like to review.

Content	Pages
Basic Numbers	2-4
Large Numbers	4-6
Ordinal Numbers	6-7
Dates	7-8
Fractions and Decimals	8-10
Number-Based Idioms	11
Practice Exercises	12

● BASIC NUMBERS

Zero

Zero is a unique number with several ways to express it in English. Understanding these variations is crucial for clear communication in different contexts.

- **zero** /'zɪərəʊ/
- **nought** /nɔ:t/
- **"0"** /əʊ/

Some more informal words for **0** are **zip** or **zippo** and **zilch**. We even use the Spanish word **nada!**

• Reading Phone Numbers

Phone numbers are an everyday occurrence where accurate pronunciation is vital. Here's how to read them clearly and naturally in English:

- Read each number separately
- Group numbers in **2s** or **3s**
- Say **"0" /əʊ/** when reading individual digits in phone numbers
- Use **"double"** for repeated digits
 - **336 244** → double three six / two double four
 - **0078 910123** → double o /əʊ/ seven eight / nine one o one two three
 - **557 0000** → double five seven / double o double o

• Zero for Temperature

Temperature readings are common in weather reports and everyday conversations. Here's how to use the number 0 correctly when talking about the weather:



- Use "zero" for 0°C
 - 0°C → It's supposed to get down to **zero degrees** tonight!

Some speakers will use "nought" but zero is much more common in phrases like this: "I think it's going to drop below zero tonight."

• Sports Scores

Into sports? You need to know how to express scores accurately. There are some differences between British and American English:

- use "nil" in British English
- use "zero" or "nothing" in American English
 - **Liverpool 1 - Manchester United 0** → Liverpool beat Man United one **nil**.
 - **Lakers 15 - Celtics 0** → The score is 15 to **zero** after the first quarter.
 - **Rays 1 - Marlins 0** → The Rays beat them one **nothing**.



Fun fact: In tennis, we say **love** for zero!

Teens vs Tens

The pronunciation of numbers from 13 to 19 (teens) and 30 to 90 (tens) can be tricky. Here's how to nail them every time:

- **Teens** (13-19): stress on the second syllable (thir-TEEN)
 - She's **fifteen** years old.
 - It costs **fourteen** dollars.
- **Tens** (30, 40, 50, etc.): stress on the first syllable (THIR-ty)
 - She has **fifty** new clients!
 - **Forty** people attended the event.

Have you ever heard the expression **fifteen minutes of fame**? We use this when somebody becomes famous but only for a short amount of time.

Let's split this **fifty-fifty** /ˌfɪfti ˈfɪfti/ means divide equally.

Note: Stress can shift when followed by a stressed noun.

When the teen number is followed by a stressed noun, the stress often shifts:

- She's got seventeen **exams**.
- There are fifteen **students** in the class.

In this case, the main stress moves to the stressed noun (e.g., exAMS), and the teen number has more equal stress on both syllables or slightly more on the first syllable.

This stress shift can be confusing even for proficient English speakers. When in doubt, it's helpful to clarify by saying each digit separately:

- "Did you say seventy?"
- "No! **Seventeen**. One-seven!"

● LARGE NUMBERS

Understanding how to read and express large numbers is crucial for discussing statistics, finances, and many other topics. In this section, you'll learn how to handle big figures in English.

Building Blocks

These are the fundamental large-number terms you need to know:

- **100** = a/one **hundred** /'hʌndrəd/
- **1,000** = a/one **thousand** /'θaʊznd/
- **1,000,000** = a/one **million** /'mɪljən/
- **1,000,000,000** = a/one **billion** /'bɪljən/

K is often used as an abbreviation for thousand:

- My dream is to run a 5K race in under twenty minutes.

• Rules

Follow these rules to read large numbers correctly:

- Don't add 's' to hundred/thousand (except in phrases like "hundreds of")
 - I received hundreds of emails while I was on holiday.
- Use "**and**" between hundred, thousand and million and numbers below a hundred; 1-99.
 - 111 → one hundred and eleven
 - 1,012 → one thousand and twelve
 - 1,984,099 → one million nine hundred and eighty-four thousand and ninety-nine.
- Don't use "**and**" when the number ends in 00
 - 1,100 → one thousand one hundred

Number	How to say it	Fun Fact
1,331	one thousand / three hundred and thirty-one	This is the smallest cubic narcissistic number in base 10.
10,989	ten thousand / nine hundred and eighty-nine	10989 x 9 = 98901 which is a palindrome 10989! A palindrome is a word or phrase that is read the same way backwards and forwards e.g. mum
111,000	one hundred and eleven thousand	The median total income of two-or-more-person households in Canada in 2020.
3,628,800	three million / six hundred and twenty-eight thousand / eight hundred	This is the number of seconds in 6 weeks! And it's the same number we get by multiplying $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 \times 8 \times 9 \times 10$. 1 day = 86,400 seconds 1 week = 604,800 seconds 6 weeks = 3,628,800 seconds



<p>1,503,047,000</p>	<p>one billion five hundred and three million forty-seven thousand</p>	<p>This is the estimated population of India in 2029.</p>
-----------------------------	--	--

Here are some additional numbers to practise:

- **101,202,303** → one hundred and one million, two hundred and two thousand, three hundred and three
- **1,234,567,890** → one billion, two hundred and thirty-four million, five hundred and sixty-seven thousand, eight hundred and ninety
- **999,999,999** → nine hundred and ninety-nine million, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine

● ORDINAL NUMBERS

Ordinal numbers are used to describe position or rank. They're essential for discussing dates, competition results and order in general.

Formation

Here's how to form ordinal numbers:

- Most end in "**th**" (fourth, fifth, sixth, etc.)
 - Exceptions: first, second, third
- Remove '**e**' before adding 'th' (nine → ninth)
- Change '**v**' to '**f**' (five → fifth, twelve → twelfth)

one → first	four → fourth	seven → seventh	ten → tenth
two → second	five → fifth	eighth → eighth	eleven → eleventh
three → third	six → sixth	nine → ninth	twelve → twelfth



Writing as Numbers

When writing ordinal numbers as digits, add the last two letters of the word after the number:

- 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, etc.

21st = twenty-first

42nd = forty-second

63rd = sixty-third

104th = one hundred and fourth

1,000th = one thousandth

1,000,000th = one millionth

● DATES

Dates are used daily in various contexts, from scheduling appointments to discussing historical events. Understanding how to read and write them correctly is crucial.

British vs. American Format

Be aware of the difference between British and American date formats:

- **British:** Day/Month/Year (06/02/1918 = 6th February 1918)
- **American:** Month/Day/Year (02/06/1918 = February 6, 1918)

Reading Years

Years are read differently depending on their structure:

- Divide four-digit years in the middle
 - 1918 = nineteen eighteen
- 2001-2009: read as full numbers
 - 2008 = two thousand and eight
- 2010 onwards: both forms acceptable
 - 2010 = two thousand and ten OR twenty ten



Practise with these:

Date	How to say it	Historical Fact
06/02/1918	the sixth of February, nineteen eighteen	On this date, some British women over the age of 30 got the right to vote.
15/04/1912	the fifteenth of April, nineteen twelve	This is the date the Titanic sunk.
20/07/1969	the twentieth /'twentiəθ/, or twentieth /'tweniəθ/ of July, nineteen sixty-nine	Apollo 11 successfully landed on the moon on this date.
04/11/2008	the fourth of November, two thousand and eight	President Obama was elected the first African-American president of the United States.

● FRACTIONS AND DECIMALS

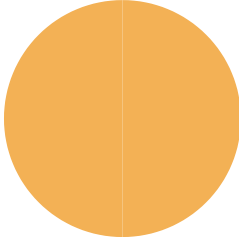
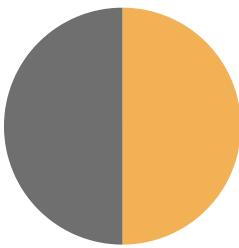
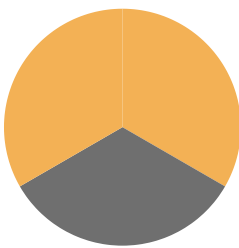
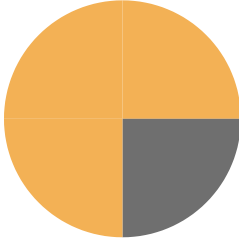
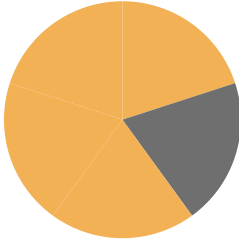
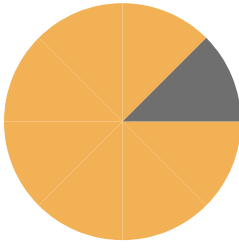
Fractions and decimals are essential in mathematics, cooking and many other areas. Understanding how to read them correctly in English is important for clear communication.

Fractions

Here's how to express fractions in English:

- Use **ordinal numbers** (third, fourth, fifth, etc.)
- Add "**of**" before nouns (except with "half," where it's optional)



Fraction	Pronunciation	Visual Representation
	whole	
$\frac{1}{2}$	half	
$\frac{1}{3}$	a third	
$\frac{1}{4}$	a fourth (quarter)	
$\frac{4}{5}$	four-fifths	
$\frac{7}{8}$	seven-eighths	

- **Mixed Numbers**

Mixed numbers combine whole numbers and fractions. Here's how to read them:

- Add "**and**" between whole number and fraction
- Examples:
 - $4 \frac{7}{8}$ = four and seven-eighths
 - $2 \frac{1}{2}$ = two and a half
 - $3 \frac{3}{4}$ = three and three-quarters

- **Large Fractions**

Mixed numbers combine whole numbers and fractions. For more complex fractions, use this method:

- Use "**over**" /'əʊvə/ for complex fractions
- Examples:
 - $243/728$ = two hundred and forty-three over seven hundred and twenty-eight
 - $15/32$ = fifteen over thirty-two

Decimals

Decimals are common in scientific and financial contexts. Here's how to read them:

- **Read each digit individually** after the decimal point
- For decimals less than 1, use "**nought/zero point**" or just "**point**"
- Examples:
 - 3.141 = three point one four one
 - 0.07 = nought point zero seven OR point zero seven
 - 2.5 = two point five
 - 0.333 = zero point three three three (recurring)
 - 10.01 = ten point zero one

● NUMBER-BASED IDIOMS

1. **at sixes and sevens** - in a state of confusion or disarray
“After the manager quit unexpectedly, the office was at **sixes and sevens** for weeks.”
2. **catch-22** - a paradoxical situation with no easy solution
“He can't get a job without experience, but he can't get experience without a job. It's a real **catch-22**.”
3. **at the eleventh hour** - at the last possible moment
“The team finished their project **at the eleventh hour**, just minutes before the deadline.”
4. **the fourth estate** - the press; the news media
“As part of **the fourth estate**, journalists have a responsibility to report the truth.”
5. **to give 110%** - to make an extreme effort
“If we want to win this game, we need to **give 110%** on the field.”
6. **on cloud nine** - extremely happy
“Ever since she got engaged, Sarah has been **on cloud nine**.”
7. **six of one, half a dozen of the other** - two alternatives are equivalent or indifferent
“I don't mind whether we go to the beach or the mountains. It's **six of one, half a dozen of the other**.”

Activity

Choose the correct answer for each question.

1. How do you read $\frac{5}{8}$?
 - a) five-eighths
 - b) five over eight
 - c) five eights

2. How would you read 0.005?
 - a) point zero zero five
 - b) nought point zero zero five
 - c) both a and b are correct

3. How would you say this date in British English: 3/5/2030?
 - a) the third of May, twenty thirty
 - b) May third, twenty thirty
 - c) the fifth of March, twenty thirty

4. What's the ordinal form of 22?
 - a) twenty-two
 - b) twentieth
 - c) twenty-second

5. How do you write "hundredth" as a number?
 - a) 100st
 - b) 100nd
 - c) 100th

6. What's the correct way to read 1,000,000,000?
 - a) one thousand million
 - b) one billion
 - c) one hundred thousands

7. In British English, how would you say a football score of 2-0?
 - a) two zero
 - b) two nil
 - c) two nothing

8. The government passed the emergency bill at the _____, just minutes before the deadline.
 - a) catch-22
 - b) eleventh hour
 - c) fourth fstate

Answers:

1) a 2) c 3) a 4) c 5) c 6) b 7) b 8) b

