



PBOT WRITING GUIDE

Tip Sheet #2

Dates, money, time, and other numbers for public communications.

HOW WE WRITE

EXAMPLES

NUMBERS GENERALLY

In general, write out numbers *one* through *nine* and any number at the beginning of a sentence. Use figures for 10 and higher, for units of measure, ages and categories below. Use hyphens for units expressed as adjectives. Use commas to separate units of thousands; don't use *k* as shorthand.

two minutes
10 months
Twenty-six miles to go!
the bridge is **100** years old.
2 inches of snow, a **2-inch** snowfall
2,000 gallons of deicer

DAYS and DATES

Spell out days of the week. Spell out months by themselves or with a year alone. For exact dates, abbreviate only *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, and *Dec.* Never abbreviate *March*, *April*, *May*, *June*, or *July*. Use cardinal numbers (1, 2, 3...), never ordinals (1st, 2nd, 3rd...). For date ranges, use connector words (to, from), hyphen (-), or en dash (–), whichever looks clearer.

Wednesdays in **November**
December 2018
Monday, Jan. 21, 2019
March 20, 2019; Sept. 23
Nov. 11-15, from **Nov. 11** to **Nov. 15**
the long **Nov. 28 – Dec. 1** weekend

MONEY

Use figures and dollar signs except for amounts less than a dollar. Write out *cents*. Use up to two decimal spaces, if needed. Write out *million* for amounts over \$1 million. Write out *billion* for amounts over \$1 billion. Use connector words not hyphens for ranges.

\$4, \$4.10
4 cents more, an **8-cent** tax
\$450,000
\$4 million, \$400.1 million, \$4.41 billion
from **\$1 million** to **\$1.02 million**

PERCENTAGES

Use figures and % symbol, with no space in between. Write these figures out if at the start of a sentence. Use up to two decimal places, as needed, and a leading zero if less than 1%. Use connector words or hyphens for ranges, depending on language construction. Write out *percentage points*.

4%
0.4%
Between 1% and 1.4%
Range of 1-1.4%
four percentage points

PHONE NUMBERS

Use figures and hyphens only. For special lines designed around words, write out phone number first then corresponding letters, especially for website content.

503-823-1700
503-865-5323 (503-865-LEAF)

SPEED

Use figures and lowercase *mph* in all cases, even first usage. Use connector words, not hyphens, for ranges.

20 mph
5- to 10-mph winds
5 to 10 mph over the speed limit

TEMPERATURE

Use figures for all except *zero*. Write out *degrees*. Write *minus*, not a minus sign, for temperatures below zero.

low was between **zero** and **5 degrees**
a **10-degree** drop is expected overnight
from **minus 10** to **5 degrees below zero**

TIME

Use figures except for *noon* and *midnight*. Lowercase *a.m.* and *p.m.* Use whole hour figures alone. Use hyphens for date ranges or connector words where clearer.

noon
12:01 p.m.
1-4 p.m.
8 p.m. to midnight

MISCELLANEOUS

Use figures for *lane miles*, a unit of measure, but not lanes, travel lanes or bike lanes, which are not. Omit comma for figures in the thousands when referring to years, blocks, and when common sense tells you. If you get it wrong, I won't be mad, just disappointed. Use a plural *s* with no apostrophe for decades or to denote sets of numbered streets.

A **1-mile** road with **four** standard travel lanes equals **4 lane miles** of road.
in **2000**
in the **2020** block
Suite **2010**, Project **2005**
2000s, '80s, 50s Greenway

PBOT writing style questions on something not covered here? Ask **Stacy Brewster** with PBOT Communications.

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Updated May 2020