Numbers Guidelines

Numbers can be used in two ways: as in digits in dates such as May 24, 1975, addresses, quantities and much more. Numbers can be used in conventional typeset as in 409 P.M. Dates such as May 24, 1975, addresses, quantities and much more.

Old style numerals, which are specifically designed to blend with textual content, are used where figures are essential in groups. In addition to being more legible, many designers and typographers also believe that lowercase numerals are more attractive than ranging numerals when isolated, and considerably more legible when set at the beginning of a line or after punctuation marks.

They are also ideal for page folios, dates, in conjunction with small caps, and in other places where you want the numerals to be discreet. Ranging numerals are great for situations where you want figures to stand out, or when you are setting all-cap copy. When these numbers are used in any of these ways, they should be centered. The ranging variety.

It’s important to pay attention to the setting of numerals. Studies show that the reader’s eye tends to fixate on the numerals, rather than read the text. Among letterforms are also somewhat less critical because context often perceives several letters at once grasping even groups of words. Ambiguities are trickier – and a little more difficult to master.

Numbers are not limited to the single figures zero through nine. There are also hundreds, thousands, millions, trillions, etc. The biggest number you will ever see is the number of grains of sand on the earth. Your best estimate for the number of grains of sand in the world today is a billion billion.

If you use fractions often, most design software provides simple automated functions used with fractions in Helvetica Now, which should have them as single characters. Some also offer 1/8 1/3 3/8 5/8 2/3 7/8 fractions. [Note: Set the fractions fit on the em space. Three em fractions, ¼ ½ ¾ can be found in some fonts.]

How About Fractions?

How do fractions fit in with text? The most common fractions are: 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, 1/5, etc. Fractions are either simple or compound. Simple fractions are easy to set. Compound fractions are more difficult to create. Compound fractions also tend to look better when they are reduced to their simplest form. For example, 3/6 should be 1/2 and not 3/6.

Some typographic styles call for the spelling of higher numerals copy, descriptive numerals of ten and under should be spelled out. This is a matter of typographic judgment. If you use fractions often, most design software provides simple automated functions used with fractions in Helvetica Now, which should have them as single characters.

The most effective way to set fractions in text is to set as em fractions. The numerator is set in superior, the denominator in inferior. Em fractions are the most common. They are built from superior and inferior numerals separated by a fraction bar. If they are designed to be tabular, em fractions are usually fairly easy to create. If they are not designed to be tabular, the numerators and denominators may be difficult to properly align. Em fractions are the most common. They are built from superior and inferior numerals separated by a fraction bar. If they are designed to be tabular, em fractions are usually fairly easy to create. If they are not designed to be tabular, the numerators and denominators may be difficult to properly align.

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