

# NOTES about NUMBERS

1 In large numbers starting with 'one' the indefinite article may be substituted in less formal use or when the number is not intended to be exact: *He's got over a thousand records.*

2 When saying ordinary numbers we can use 'zero', 'nought' or 'o' / əʊ / for the number 0; 'zero' is the most common US usage and the most technical or precise form, 'o' is the least technical or precise. ⇨ Usage at NOUGHT.

3 A comma is sometimes used instead of a space to separate the thousands in numbers greater than 9 999: 10 000 / 10,000; 7 586 954 / 7,586,954.

4 Thousands may be spoken as hundreds, especially in informal use: *eleven hundred* (ie 1 100).

5 Long numbers (eg bank accounts, credit card numbers, etc) are spoken as separate digits grouped rhythmically in twos or threes:

*o five four | eight six three | nine double six* (ie 054863966).

6 Names for numbers above *trillion* are rarely used. When larger numbers need to be

expressed, eg in astronomy, this is usually done in terms of powers of ten, ie the number of zeros following the 10:

*ten to the power fifteen* / *to the fifteenth (power)* (ie 10 000 000 000 000 000).

7 In the spoken forms of vulgar fractions, the versions 'and a half/quarter/third' are preferred to 'and one half/quarter/third' whether the measurement is approximate or precise. With more obviously precise fractions like  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $\frac{1}{16}$ , 'and one eighth/sixteenth' is normal. Complex fractions like  $\frac{1}{16} \frac{2}{3}$  are spoken as 'three over four-six-two, twenty over eighty-three', especially in mathematical expressions, eg 'twenty-two over seven' for  $\frac{22}{7}$ .

8 A point is used in writing decimal fractions (rather than a comma, as in continental Europe). The digits after the point are read by saying 'point' and then each digit separately:

*two hundred and seventy-three point two nine six* (ie 273.296). In decimal fractions less than one, the 'nought' (or 'zero') before the decimal point may be omitted: *point seven five* (ie 0.75).