



How to write/say the date

1. How to write dates



In English, contrary to French, the names of months, just like the names of the days of the week, always begin with capital letters.

Ex. *Calling all Teachers ! McDonald's is offering you free coffee every Monday in September !* (familysavings.com, 2015)



In formal English, days & full dates are always preceded by the preposition ON.

Ex. *The fall semester will start on September 9, 2020 with lectures offered face-to-face, streamed online, and recorded for later access.* (suu.edu, 2020)

A brand-new SpaceX booster is ready to launch a fresh cargo ship to the International Space Station for NASA on Thursday (June 3). (space.com, 20/04/2021)



All verbs associated with a specific date anchoring the action/state in the past are in the preterit.

Ex. *On January 31, 2020, the United Kingdom formally left the European Union after 47 years of membership.* (ogletree.com, Febr. 2020)

1.1. FULLY-WRITTEN DATES.

▪ The abbreviations -ST, -ND, -RD or -TH may be added after the ordinal number

→ 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, etc.

▪ British English.

In British English, as in French, dates are usually written in the order DAY/MONTH/YEAR.

Ex. *Prince William was born on 21 June 1982 in St Mary's hospital Paddington, London, and was christened by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Buckingham Palace on 4 August 1982.* (britroyals.com)

▪ American English.

In American English, it is common to write the month first & to insert a comma before the year.

Ex. *Google was founded on September 4, 1998 - 21 years ago today.* (thenerd.com, Sept. 2019)

NB : Under the influence of American English, Britons now tend to use the order M/D/Y more & more often.

1.2. ALL FIGURE DATES.

All-figure dates are again written differently in British & American English.

▪ British English.

In common with continental European usage, British numerical dates are invariably ordered DD/MM/YYYY.

▪ American English.

But while British people put the day first, Americans begin with the month, ordering their dates MM/DD/YYYY.

So, for example, 09/11/2001 reads as « 9 November 2001 » in Britain but as « September 11, 2001 » in America.

“What day is it?”

Today - said Piglet

“Ah”, said Pooh, “my favorite day”



HISTORICAL REFERENCES

To distinguish between dates before & after the birth of Christ, the abbreviations **BC** (« before Christ ») & **AD** (from the Latin *Anno Domini* : « in the year of our Lord ») are commonly used. In recent years, more secular phrases have gained currency : **BCE** (« before the common era ») & **CE** (« common era »).



BC always *follows* the date, whereas AD usually comes *before* the date. Ex. *Julius Caesar first landed in Britain in 55 BC.*

≠ *The Roman conquest of Britain effectively began in AD 43.*

In historical writing, when dates of events are only known approximately, they are preceded by the word **CIRCA** (Latin : « around »), often abbreviated as **c.** or **ca.**

Ex. *Wheels were invented circa 3,500 B.C., and rapidly spread across the Eastern Hemisphere.* (livescience.com)

2. How to say/read dates out loud

2.1. YEAR NAMES.

▪ In British usage, year names are divided into 2 separate units. Ex. 2010 → « twenty-ten ».

-In years ending in -0x, the zero is pronounced like the letter O. Ex. 2001 → « twenty-O-one ».

-In years ending in -00, the 2 zeros are pronounced like two Os in a row. Ex. 1900 → « nineteen-O-O ».

▪ In American English, year names tend to be read like standard figures. Ex. 2010 → « two-thousand-and-ten ».

American speakers (& writers) now often tend to drop the AND, even in formal contexts. Ex. 2020 → Ex. « two-thousand-twenty ».

2.2. FULL DATES.

▪ If you put the day before the month, use the definite article before the day & the preposition OF before the month.

Ex. 5 November 2024 → « the fifth of November, twenty-twenty-four ».

▪ If you put the month before the day, use the definite article before the day in formal speech. In American English, the definite article is often dropped.

Ex. November 5, 2024 → « November (the) fifth, two thousand (and) twenty-four ».

2.3. DECADE NAMES.

▪ Decades in the 20th century are often elliptically called « the eighties » or « the nineties », & written *the 80s* or *the 90s*.

▪ Decades in other, more distant centuries are written in full, e.g. *the 1890s*, which is read out as « the eighteen-nineties ».

▪ The 1st decade in a century (from year 0 to year 9) is read as « the xx-hundreds ». For instance, the phrase *the 1700s* is rendered as « the seventeen-hundreds ».

▪ The 2nd decade in a century is read as « the xx-tens », e.g. the past decade will probably be known retrospectively as *the twenty-tens*.

▪ The infamous 1st decade of the 21st century is now often informally referred to as *the Noughties* (NOUGHT = zero + pun on the adjective NAUGHTY (bad, malicious)).



Although often found, it is a mistake to insert an apostrophe before the final S : it a PLURAL, not a possessive

