



Ordinal numbers express ranking rather than quantity. They can be spelled out (first, second) or written as a numeral with a suffix (20th, 21st). **Ordinal letters** are the suffixes after the numeral (th, st). In general, treat ordinals the same as regular numbers: Spell out “first” through “ninth,” and use numerals for “10th” and above. When you have a mixture of ordinals below and above nine, use numerals.

Examples:

The fourth patient was admitted in critical condition.
The 5th and the 12th patients showed similar symptoms.
The 12th patient died shortly after his arrival.
(Source: [CDC Style Guide](#))

Note that the ordinal letters above are **not in superscript**, which is tiny and hard to read (Source: [Chicago Manual of Style](#)). If your version of Word defaults to superscript, there’s an easy fix:

- File
- Options
- Proofing
- AutoCorrect options
- Uncheck “Ordinals (1st) with superscript”

Here’s another useful ordinal tip: **Dates don’t take ordinal letters**. Even though you pronounce them, they don’t need to be spelled out.

Examples:

She was born on April 24, 1982.
The webinar is on December 5.

For more information

If you’d like a deeper dive into ordinals, [Grammarly](#) has a more detailed roundup.