

Saying Numbers

In British English: Oh, Zero, Love, Nought and Nil

| | | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|----------|------------------------------|
| We say oh | after a decimal point | 5.03 | five point oh three |
| | in telephone numbers | 67 01 38 | six seven oh one three eight |
| | in bus numbers | No. 701 | get the seven oh one |
| | in hotel room numbers | Room 206 | I'm in room two oh six. |
| | in years | 1905 | nineteen oh five |
| We say nought | before the decimal point | 0.02 | nought point oh two |
| We say zero | for the number | 0 | the number zero |
| | for temperature | -5°C | five degrees below zero |
| We say nil | in football scores | 5-0 | Spain won five nil. |
| We say love | in tennis | 15-0 | The score is fifteen love. |

Now say the following:

1. The exact figure is 0.002.
2. Can you get back to me on 01244 249071? I'll be here all morning.
3. Can you put that on my bill? I'm in room 804.
4. Do we have to hold the conference in Reykjavik? It's 30 degrees below 0!
5. What's the score? 2-0 to Juventus.

The Decimal Point

In English we use a point (.) and not a comma (,) for decimals.

We use commas in figures only when writing thousands.

10,001 is ten thousand and one.

10.001 is ten point oh oh one.

In English all the numbers after a decimal point are read separately:

| | | |
|-------|-----------------------------|---|
| 10.66 | ten point six six | Not ten point sixty six |
| 0.325 | nought point three two five | |
| 0.001 | nought point oh oh one | or 10^{-3} , ten to the power minus three |

You will also hear people say:

| | | |
|------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 0.05 | zero point oh five | or oh point oh five |
|------|--------------------|---------------------|

But if the number after the decimal point is a unit of money, it is read like a normal number:

| | | | |
|--------|---------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| £12.50 | twelve pounds fifty | DM 2.95 | two marks ninety five |
|--------|---------------------|---------|-----------------------|

NB. This is very important. When you do business on the phone, say nought point three seven five (0.375) and not nought point three hundred and seventy five. If the listener missed the word point, you might lose a lot of money. Say the digits separately after the point.

Now say the following:

1. It's somewhere between 3.488 and 3.491.
2. Look, it's less than 0.0001! It's hardly worth worrying about.
3. I changed all those lira into sterling and I only got £13.60!
4. That's about 14.50 in Swiss francs.
5. Did you say 0.225 or 0.229?
6. The dollar is at 1.95.
7. No, I meant 15.005 not 15,005.