

A QUICK GUIDE TO ROMAN NUMERALS

Roman numerals use letters to represent numbers:

I = 1 V = 5 X = 10 L = 50 C = 100 D = 500 M = 1000

Most numbers are written from largest to smallest, adding the values together:

VI = 6 (5 + 1)
XV = 15 (10 + 5)
XX = 20 (10 + 10)

Sometimes a smaller numeral comes before a larger one, which means it is subtracted.

But this only works with certain pairs:

IV = 4 (5 - 1)
IX = 9 (10 - 1)
XL = 40 (50 - 10)
XC = 90 (100 - 10)
CD = 400 (500 - 100)
CM = 900 (1000 - 100)

The important bit!

A smaller numeral can only be placed before certain larger numerals.

For example, I can only come before V or X to subtract.

For larger numbers, it can help to break them into smaller parts.

For example, 49 = 40 + 9:

40 = XL
9 = IX
49 = XLIX

The same idea works for other numbers:

44 = 40 + 4 = XLIV
99 = 90 + 9 = XCIX — not IC
490 = 400 + 90 = CDXC

A handy rule to remember:

I can subtract from V or X
X can subtract from L or C
C can subtract from D or M

When in doubt, break the number into hundreds, tens and units,
convert each part, then put them together.