

THE PLURAL

The majority of nouns in English spell their plural by simply adding a final –s. Nouns that are noncount or abstract (e.g. cheese, sugar, honesty, intelligence) generally take singular verb, but in some instances can be plural, in which they follow the rules for plural based on their spelling. Also, there are categories of words which are only plural, even though their spelling does not reflect this. For irregular count nouns and nouns that have been borrowed from other languages, the rules are as follows:

1. Variation of the final “s” rule:

General rule: singular + s:

*Girl girls *book books *pen pens

Nouns that end with –s, -z, -x, -sh, -ch, add –es

*glass glasses *buzz buzzes *box boxes *bush bushes *watch watches

Nouns that end with –o add es

*potato potato**es** *echo echo**es** *hero hero**es**

Exceptions:

*studio studio**s** *piano piano**s** *photo photo**s** *zoo zoo**s**

Either:

*buffalo buffalo**(e)s** *cargo cargo**(e)s** *motto motto**(e)s** *volcano**(e)s**

Nouns that end in a consonant –y change –y to –i and add –es

*baby baby**ies** *spy spy**ies** *puppy puppy**ies**

Exceptions: proper nouns The Kennedy**s** February**s**

Nouns that end in –f, or –fe change the –f into –v and add –es

*shelf shelf**es** *knife knife**es** *wolf wolf**es** *wife wife**s**

Dwarf, hoof, scarf, wharf → (f**s**/ **ves**)

2. Nouns adopted from other languages

Singular ends in –s

Plural ends in –es

Analysis

analys**es**

Basis

bas**es**

Singular ends in –um

Plural ends in –a

Dat**um**

dat**a**

Nouns that ends in –s but have no singular (aggregate nouns)

Accommodations, amends, archives, arms (weapons), bowels, intestines, brains(intellect), clothes, communications, congratulations, contents, stairs, thanks, goods.

Nouns that are plural but do not end in –s

People, police, cattle.

Some nouns (abstract, materials, and kinds of food) are always SINGULAR

Bread, tea, cheese, jam, soup, soap, snow, cotton, wood, water, information, advice, knowledge, furniture, news...

Plural same as singular

Some words ending in –s do not change in the plural

*means *series *species *works (factory) *crossroads *headquarters.

Plural of compounds

Dining-room → dining-rooms

Sister-in-law → sisters-in-law

Passer-by → passers-by

Plural ending with a vowel +y do not change the –y forming plurals in the normal way:

a way → two ways *a play → two plays *a boy → boys

Plurals in ‘s

An apostrophe (‘) is used before the –‘s in the plurals of letters of the alphabet, and sometimes in the plurals of dates and abbreviations.

- She spelt ‘necessary’ with two **c’s**.
- He came here in the **1960’s**. (or ...the **1960s**)
- Do you think **MP’s** do a good job? (or... **MPs**)

Plural of nationality names ending in –ese, -ch, -sh, and some numbers and units of measurements in the same as the singular.

- Ten Americans, fifteen **Japanese**, twelve **French** and twenty **British** attended the conference.
- Two **hundred** people.
- Five **thousand** dollars.
- He is five **foot** eight tall.