

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 potatoes *echo echoes *hero heroes

Exceptions:

*studio studios *piano pianos *photo photos *zoo zoos

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 babies *spy spies *puppy puppies

Exceptions: proper nouns The Kennedys Februarys

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

*shelf shelves *knife knives *wolf wolves *wife wives

Dwarf, hoof, scarf, wharf → (fs/ ves)

2. Nouns adopted from other languages

Singular ends in -s

Plural ends in -es

Analysis

analyses

Basis

bases

Singular ends in -um

Plural ends in -a

Datum

data

Curriculum

curricula

Singular ends in –on

Plural ends in a

Criterion

criteria

Phenomenon

phenomena

Singular end in –a

Plural ends in –ae

Formula

formulae

Antenna

antennae

Singular ends in –ex or –ix

Plural ends in –ices

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indices

Appendix

appendices

Singular ends in –us

Plural ends in –i

Focus

foci

Stimulus

stimuli

Singular ends in –us

Plural ends in –a

Corpus

corpora

Genus

genera

Singular ends in –eau

Plural ends in –eaux/eaus

Bureau

Bureaux/bureaus

Beau

beaux/beaus

3. Other irregular plural

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Child	chlidren	ox	oxen
Foot	feet	Penny	pence
Goose	geese	Person	people
Louse	lice	Tooth	teeth
Man	men	woman	women
mouse	mice		

Nouns that have only plural form and so take a plural verb. Things that come in pairs

Tools: glasses, scissors, binoculars, forceps, tongs, tweezers

Clothes: jeans, pants, pyjamas, trousers

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 → dinning-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**. (orthe **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.