

Plural Nouns

A **noun** is a type of word which refers to a person, place, or thing. Nouns can be conjugated in either singular or plural form. A **singular** noun refers to just one person, place, or thing (for example, a bat or a ship). A **plural** noun refers to multiple people, places, or things (for example, bats or ships).

The majority of English count nouns are regular and predictable in the spelling of the plural form¹. However, other nouns have irregular plural spellings. Both of these kinds of nouns will be covered here.

Rule #1: Add -s

Most nouns can be pluralized simply by adding an -s at the end of the word. For example:

- edge/edges
- girl/girls
- song/songs
- bag/bags
- cat/cats
- boy/boys
- day/days

Rule #2: Add -es to nouns ending in *s*, *z*, *ch*, *sh*, and *x*

Nouns which end in the letters *s*, *z*, *ch*, *sh*, and *x-es* at the end. For example:

- glass/glasses
- horse/horses
- buzz/buzzes
- dish/dishes
- box/boxes
- bush/bushes
- witch/witches
- switch/switches

Rule #3: Nouns ending in *o*

For words ending in the letter *o*, sometimes they are pluralized by adding *s*, while other words must be pluralized by adding *es*. These words must be memorized, because there is no simple rule to explain the differences.²

Examples (*es*):

- echo/echoes
- embargo/embargoes

- hero/heroes
- potato/potatoes
- veto/vetoes
- tomato/tomatoes
- torpedo/torpedoes
- hero/heroes
- veto/vetoes

Examples (s):

Most nouns ending in o preceded by a vowel are pluralized by simply adding s³. Some other o nouns do this, too:

- auto/autos
- folio/folios
- cameo/cameos
- portfolio/portfolios
- kilo/kilos
- photo/photos
- zoo/zoos
- memo/memos
- solo/solos
- soprano/sopranos
- studio/studios
- pimento/pimentos
- tattoo/tattoos
- video/videos
- piano/pianos
- pro/pros
- kangaroo/kangaroos

Rule #4: Nouns Ending in a consonant Y

For nouns ending in the letter y, replace the ending y with ies. For example:

- baby/babies
- story/stories
- poppy/poppies
- baby/babies
- daisy/daisies
- spy/spies
- lady/ladies

Note that for words ending in y preceded by a vowel (a complex vowel sound), an s is simply added, as usual. For example:

- day/days
- toy/toys
- essay/essays
- turkey/turkeys

- chimney/chimneys
- play/plays
- joy/joys
- valley/valleys
- alley/alleys
- volley/volleys

(Irregular) Some nouns Ending in -F or -FE

For some nouns ending in f or fe, replace the ending f or fe with ves:

- calf/calves
- elf/elves
- half/halves
- hoof/hooves
- leaf/leaves
- life/lives
- loaf/loaves
- scarf/scarves
- self/selves
- sheaf/sheaves
- wolf/wolves
- shelf/shelves
- thief/thieves
- knife/knives
- wife/wives

(Irregular) Some nouns change the vowel sound in becoming plural:

- fireman/firemen
- foot/feet
- goose/geese
- louse/lice
- man/men
- mouse/mice
- tooth/teeth
- woman/women

(Irregular) Some Old English plurals are still in use:

- child/children
- ox/oxen

Nouns adopted from other languages⁴

Singular ends in -IS

For nouns in which the singular form ends in is, the plural form will end in es. For example:

- hypothesis/hypotheses
- diagnosis/diagnoses
- ellipsis/ellipses
- analysis/analyses
- basis/bases
- crisis/crises
- thesis/theses
- oasis/oases
- synthesis/syntheses
- synopsis/synopses
- emphasis/emphases
- neurosis/neuroses
- paralysis/paralyses
- parenthesis/parentheses

Singular ends in -UM

Plural ends in a:

- bacterium/bacteria
- datum/data
- curriculum/curricula
- medium/media
- memorandum/memoranda
- ovum/ova
- symposium/symposia
- erratum/errata
- addendum/addenda
- stratum/strata

Singular ends in -ON

Plural ends in -a

- criterion/criteria
- phenomenon/phenomena
- automaton/automata

Singular ends in -A

Plural ends in -ae

- alga/algae
- amoeba/amoebae
- larva/larvae
- formula/formulae
- antenna/antennae

- nebula/nebulae
- vertebra/vertebrae
- vita/vitae

Singular ends in -ex or -ix

Plural ends in -ices:

- appendix/appendices
- index/indexes
- matrix/matrices
- vertex/vertices
- vortex/vortices
- apex/apices
- cervix/cervices
- axis/axes

Singular ends in -us

Plural ends in -i:

- alumnus/alumni
- bacillus/bacilli
- cactus/cacti
- focus/foci
- stimulus/stimuli
- focus/foci
- octopus/octopi
- radius/radii
- stimulus/stimuli
- terminus/termini

Singular ends in -us:

Plural ends in -a:

- corpus/corpora
- genus/genera

Singular ends in -eau

Plural ends in -eaux:

- bureau/bureaux
- beau/beaux
- portmanteau/portmanteaux
- tableau/tableaux

Other irregular plurals, retained from different languages:

Italian

- libretto/libretti
- tempo/tempi
- virtuoso/virtuosi

Hebrew

- cherub/cherubim
- seraph/seraphim

Greek

- schema/schemata

Other Irregular Plurals

- man/men
- woman/women
- fungus/fungi
- species/species
- medium/media
- person/people
- foot/feet
- tooth/teeth
- goose/geese
- mouse/mice
- louse/lice
- child/children
- penny/pence
- ox/oxen

Possessive Plurals

For plural nouns ending in the letter s, add only the apostrophe. For example:

- The Johnsons' farm
- Singers' voices
- The thieves' guild

For plural nouns not ending in the letter s, add an apostrophe and s. For example:

- Women's soccer
- Children's books

Words Which are Always Plural or Always Singular

Some nouns are always plural or always singular. Some other nouns have the same form for singular and plural.⁵

Some nouns are always plural (things that come in pairs):

- pants
- clothes
- binoculars
- jeans
- forceps
- trousers
- tongs
- shorts
- tweezers
- people
- pajamas
- police
- shorts
- glasses
- scissors
- mathematics

Aggregate Nouns

Some nouns end in -s but have no singular (these are called aggregate nouns). These are traditionally plural, but are also used for singular forms:

- accommodations
- bread
- amends
- tea
- archives
- cheese
- bowels
- jam
- communications
- soup
- congratulations
- soap
- contents
- snow
- stairs
- cotton
- wood
- thanks
- water
- goods

- information
- advice
- knowledge
- furniture
- news
- means
- series
- species
- barracks
- crossroads
- gallows
- headquarters

Nouns with the same form

Some nouns have the same form for singular and plural, such as fish and animals. (Note that not all fish have the irregular plural form, though--e.g., one shark becomes two sharks)

- salmon
- trout
- deer
- sheep
- swine
- offspring