

Plural of nouns

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Plural forms in French might seem complicated at first glance, but once you understand the basic rules and exceptions, it becomes much easier to master. In this article, we'll explore the different rules governing the formation of plural nouns in French, providing plenty of examples to help you grasp the concepts. You may also refer to [this pdf](#) for more details.

What is a Plural Noun?

A noun is plural when it refers to more than one person, object, place, idea, etc. For example, *une plante* (a plant) becomes *des plantes* (plants), *un téléphone* (a phone) becomes *des téléphones* (phones), and *une lampe* (a lamp) becomes *des lampes* (lamps). However, the

formation of plurals in French often depends on the ending of the singular noun. Let's break it down.

1. Nouns Ending in -e

Most nouns ending in **-e** in the singular simply add an **-s** in the plural. This is one of the simplest rules.

- **Examples:**

- Une plante → Des plantes (a plant → plants)
 - Un téléphone → Des téléphones (a phone → phones)
 - Une lampe → Des lampes (a lamp → lamps)
 - Une table → Des tables (a table → tables)
 - Une robe → Des robes (a dress → dresses)
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2. Nouns Ending in -s, -x, or -z

Nouns ending in **-s**, **-x**, or **-z** in the singular **do not change** in the plural. They remain the same.

- **Examples:**

- **Ending in -s:**

- * Un bras → Des bras (an arm → arms)
- * Un corps → Des corps (a body → bodies)

– **Ending in -x:**

- * Une croix → Des croix (a cross → crosses)
- * Un choix → Des choix (a choice → choices)
- * Un prix → Des prix (a prize → prizes)

– **Ending in -z:**

- * Un nez → Des nez (a nose → noses)
 - * Un gaz → Des gaz (a gas → gases)
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3. Nouns Ending in -eau, -au, or -eu

Nouns ending in **-eau**, **-au**, or **-eu** generally take an **-x** in the plural.

• **Examples:**

- Un château → Des châteaux (a castle → castles)
- Un bateau → Des bateaux (a boat → boats)
- Un cadeau → Des cadeaux (a gift → gifts)
- Un cheveu → Des cheveux (a hair → hairs)
- Un neveu → Des neveux (a nephew → nephews)

Exception: Some words like *pneu* (tire → des pneus) and *bleu* (blue → des bleus) take an **-s** instead of an **-x**.

4. Nouns Ending in -ou

Nouns ending in **-ou** are a bit special. Most take an **-s** in the plural, but there are a few exceptions that take an **-x**.

- **Examples with -s:**

- Un bisou → Des bisous (a kiss → kisses)
- Un clou → Des clous (a nail → nails)
- Un trou → Des trous (a hole → holes)
- Un fou → Des fous (a madman → madmen)

- **Examples with -x:**

- Un bijou → Des bijoux (a jewel → jewels)
- Un caillou → Des cailloux (a rock → rocks)
- Un chou → Des choux (a cabbage → cabbages)
- Un hibou → Des hiboux (an owl → owls)

These exceptions must be memorized, as there is no specific rule to explain them.

5. Nouns Ending in -al

Nouns ending in **-al** in the singular usually change to **-aux** in the plural.

- **Examples:**

- Un cheval → Des chevaux (a horse → horses)
- Un journal → Des journaux (a newspaper → newspapers)

- Un animal → Des animaux (an animal → animals)
- Un festival → Des festivals (a festival → festivals)
- Un récital → Des récitals (a recital → recitals)

Exception: Some words like *bal* (ball → des bals), *carnaval* (carnival → des carnivals), and *chacal* (jackal → des chacals) take an **-s** in the plural.

6. Nouns Ending in -ail

Nouns ending in **-ail** can take an **-s** or change to **-aux** in the plural, depending on the word.

- **Examples with -s:**

- Un détail → Des détails (a detail → details)
- Un chandail → Des chandails (a sweater → sweaters)
- Un épouvantail → Des épouvantails (a scarecrow → scarecrows)

- **Examples with -aux:**

- Un bail → Des baux (a lease → leases)
 - Un corail → Des coraux (a coral → corals)
 - Un émail → Des émaux (an enamel → enamels)
 - Un travail → Des travaux (a work → works)
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7. Exceptions and Special Cases

French is a language rich in exceptions, and some plural forms don't follow any specific rules. For example:

- **Un œil** → **Des yeux** (an eye → eyes) (complete change)
 - **Un ciel** → **Des cieux** (a sky → skies) (complete change)
 - **Un monsieur** → **Des messieurs** (a gentleman → gentlemen) (irregular form)
 - **Une madame** → **Des mesdames** (a lady → ladies) (irregular form)
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Conclusion

Mastering plural rules in French takes a bit of practice, but with time, it becomes second nature. The key is to familiarize yourself with common endings and memorize the most frequent exceptions. Feel free to revisit this article and practice with examples to reinforce your knowledge.