

Rules of Singular / Plural

Formation of the Plurals

We can change the singular number of nouns into the plural number in the following ways:

- (i) By adding **-s** to the singular

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|--------|---------|---|----------|
| Girl | - | Girls | Goat | - | Goats |
| Spoon | - | Spoons | Teacher | - | Teachers |

- (ii) By adding **-es** to the nouns ending in **-s, -sh, -ch, -ss, -x**

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|---------|-------|---|---------|
| Class | - | Classes | Match | - | Matches |
| Brush | - | Brushes | Tax | - | Taxes |

- (iii) Most nouns ending in **-o** form their plural by adding **-es** to the singular

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|---------|---------|---|-----------|
| Mango | - | Mangoes | Potato | - | Potatoes |
| Cargo | - | Cargoes | Buffalo | - | Buffaloes |

- But some nouns ending in **-o** merely add **-s** to form their plural

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|--------|--------|---|---------|
| Piano | - | Pianos | Logo | - | Logos |
| Photo | - | Photos | Stereo | - | Stereos |

- (iv) Nouns ending in **-y**, preceded by a consonant, form their plural by changing **-y** into **-ies**

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|---------|------|---|--------|
| Baby | - | Babies | Lady | - | Ladies |
| Story | - | Stories | City | - | Cities |

- But nouns ending in **-y** preceded by a vowel, form their plural by adding only **-s** to the singular

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|------|-----|---|------|
| Toy | - | Toys | Day | - | Days |
| Boy | - | Boys | Ray | - | Rays |

- (v) By replacing **f/fe** with **-ves**

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|---------|-------|---|---------|
| Calf | - | Calves | Thief | - | Thieves |
| Shelf | - | Shelves | Wife | - | Wives |

- But some nouns ending in **-f** or **-fe** add **-s**

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|--------|---------|---|----------|
| Chief | - | Chiefs | Proof | - | Proofs |
| Cafe | - | Cafes | Giraffe | - | Giraffes |

- (vi) A few nouns form their plural by changing the inside vowel of the singular

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|-------|-------|---|-------|
| Man | - | Men | Goose | - | Geese |
| Woman | - | Women | Louse | - | Lice |
| Foot | - | Feet | Mouse | - | Mice |
| Tooth | - | Teeth | | | |

- (vii) By adding **-en** to the singular

Child - Children Ox - Oxen

(viii) By adding -s at the end of abbreviations; as,

BA - BAs MP - MPs

(ix) Some nouns are always used in plural form; as,

(a) Names of instruments – bellows, pincers, scissors, spectacles, tongs

(b) Names of certain articles of dress – breeches, drawers, jeans, pyjamas, trousers

(c) Certain other nouns – annals, assets, environs, nuptials, tidings

(x) by adding -s to main/principal word in compound nouns (nouns with more than one word); as,

Mother-in-law - Mothers-in-law

Man-of-war - Men-of-war

Passer-by - Passers-by

Commander-in-chief - Commanders-in-chief

Man-servant - Men-servants (It takes double plural.)

(xi) The following nouns look plural but are in fact singular; as,

Mathematics Electronics Measles News

Mumps Billiards Innings

(xii) Certain collective nouns, though singular in form, are always used as plurals; as,

Poultry Cattle People Gentry

(xiii) There are some nouns which are always used in singular form; as,

Information Furniture Offspring Scenery Poetry

(xiv) Some nouns have similar singular and plural forms; as,

Deer Sheep Species Series

(xv) The following nouns have similar singular and plural forms, when used after numerals; as,

dozen gross hundred thousand

(xvi) Many nouns taken from foreign languages keep their original plural forms; as,

Alumnus - Alumni Criterion - Criteria

Analysis - Analyses Medium - Media

Crisis - Crises Phenomenon - Phenomena

Datum - Data Radius - Radii

(xvii) Some nouns have two forms for the plural, each with a somewhat different meaning; as,

Singular

Plural

| | | | | |
|---------|---|----------|---|--------------------------|
| Brother | - | Brothers | — | sons of the same parents |
| | | Brethren | — | members of a society |
| Cloth | - | Cloths | — | pieces of cloth |
| | | Clothes | — | garments |

(xviii) Some nouns have different meanings in the singular and the plural; as,

Singular

Plural

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|-------------------|--------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Good | - | morally right | Goods | - | things that are produced to be sold |
| Force | - | physical strength | Forces | - | the weapons and soldiers |