

Plural Noun Forms

Plural nouns are words used to indicate that there is more than one person, animal, place, thing, or idea. The difference between singular and plural nouns is simple once you know what to look for.

The plural form of most nouns is created simply by adding the letter s.

- more than one book = books
- more than one plate = plates
- more than one toy = toys

Compound nouns are pluralized by adding to the main noun:

- more than one bill of fare = bills of fare
- more than one daughter-in-law = daughters-in-law
- more than one ten-year-old = ten-year-olds

Words that end in a consonant and a -y need to have their -y changed to an -i, with -es added on. (Note the difference between this and toys, where the final -y is not preceded by a consonant.)

- more than one baby = babies
- more than one gallery = galleries
- more than one reality = realities

This rule does not apply to proper nouns.

- more than one Kennedy = Kennedys
- more than one Barry = Barry
- more than one Gary = Garys

Words that end in -ch, -x, -sh, -s, or s-like sounds require an -es for the plural.

- more than one witch = witches
- more than one box = boxes
- more than one Jones = Joneses

Words that end in -o create special problems.

- more than one potato = potatoes
- ... however ...
- more than one cello = cellos
- ... and for words where another vowel comes before the -o ...
- more than one stereo = stereos

Plurals of words that end in -f or -fe usually change the f sound to a v sound and add -s or -es.

- more than one leaf = leaves
- more than one knife = knives
- more than one elf = elves

There are, however, exceptions. Nouns that end in two vowels plus -f usually form plurals in the normal way, with just an -s.

- more than one roof = roofs
- more than one chief = chiefs
- more than one spoof = spoofs

Several nouns have irregular plural forms. Plurals formed in this way are sometimes called mutated (or mutating) plurals.

- more than one child = children
- more than one person = people
- more than one deer = deer

Other common nouns with irregular plural forms:

die/dice, foot/feet, goose/geese, louse/lice, man/men, mouse/mice, ox/oxen, that/those, this/these, tooth/teeth, woman/women, take/took, teach/taught, swim/swam, speak/spoke

For a more comprehensive list, visit:

<http://www.englishpage.com/irregularverbs/irregularverbs.html>.

Some nouns maintain their Latin or Greek form in the plural.

- more than one nucleus = nuclei
- more than one thesis = theses
- more than one criterion = criteria

Practice Exercises

Circle the correct plural form.

ski	skis / skies
belly	bellys / bellies
difficulty	difficulties / difficultys
gas	gasses / gases
epoch	epochs / epoches
hero	heroes / heros
memo	memoes / memos
self	self / selves
dwarf	dwarfs / dwarves
woman	women / womans
ox	oxes / oxen
goose	gooses / geese
fish	fish / fishes
phenomenon	phenomenons / phenomena

Rewrite these sentences with the correct plural form where necessary.

1) Andrew went to his professor's office to pick up the bookes and papers required for next week's lab.

2) Brian's advisor is not good with computers and prefers that he submit his assignments with a series of faxes instead of emails.

3) On the way home from class, Tom had to pick up a bunch of tomatos, some carrots, and two loafs of bread for dinner.

Sources and Further Reading/Practice:

Capital Community College. "Plural Noun Forms." Accessed April 19, 2015.

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/plurals.htm>

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