

Plurals of Nouns

A. Regular Plurals

1. Most nouns ending in a consonant or a silent **e** form regular plurals by adding **-s**. See below for exceptions.

| Singular | Plural |
|----------|----------|
| bed | beds |
| cent | cents |
| cheetah | cheetahs |
| clue | clues |
| cuff | cuffs |
| horse | horses |
| path | paths |
| prize | prizes |
| topic | topics |
| truck | trucks |
| window | windows |

2. Words that end in sibilants such as **ch** (when not pronounced as /k/), **ce**, **dge**, **ge**, **s**, **tch**, **x**, or **z** add **-es**. The **-es** is pronounced as a separate syllable.

| Singular | Plural |
|----------|--------------|
| age | ages |
| atlas | atlases |
| box | boxes |
| bus | buses/busses |
| church | churches |
| class | classes |
| dish | dishes |
| ditch | ditches |
| edge | edges |
| fox | foxes |
| gas | gases |
| hoax | hoaxes |
| inch | inches |
| mass | masses |
| peach | peaches |
| quiz | quizzes |
| topaz | topazes |
| waltz | waltzes |
| watch | watches |
| wish | wishes |

2a. Words that end in **ch when the **ch** is pronounced as /k/ add only **-s**.**

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Czech | Czechs |
| epoch | epochs |
| loch | lochs |
| matriarch | matriarchs |
| oligarch | oligarchs |
| patriarch | patriarchs |
| stomach | stomachs |
| tach | tachs |
| tech | techs |

3. Words ending in **-y.**

3a. Words ending in a vowel plus **y add **-s** to form the plural.**

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| boy | boys |
| day | days |
| donkey | donkeys |
| guy | guys |
| hallway | hallways |
| toy | toys |

Exceptions:

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| colloquy | colloquies |
| money | moneys/monies |
| soliloquy | soliloquies |

3b. Words ending in a consonant plus **y change the **y** to **i** and add **-es**.**

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| artery | arteries |
| biopsy | biopsies |
| body | bodies |
| country | countries |
| story | stories |

4. Nouns ending in **-f, -ff, or -fe**.

4a. Many of these nouns just add **-s**.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| belief | beliefs |
| chief | chiefs |
| cliff | cliffs |
| cuff | cuffs |
| handkerchief | handkerchiefs |
| proof | proofs |
| reef | reefs |
| roof | roofs |
| sheriff | sheriffs |

4b. Others change the **-f** to **-v** and add **-es**.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| calf | calves |
| elf | elves |
| half | halves |
| knife | knives |
| leaf | leaves |
| life | lives |
| scarf | scarves |
| self | selves |
| thief | thieves |
| wife | wives |
| wolf | wolves |

4c. A few have both forms.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| dwarf | *dwarfs/dwarves |
| hoof | hoofs/*hooves |
| loaf | loafs/*loaves |
| wharf | wharfs/*wharves |

***Preferred form**

5. Nouns ending in a vowel (except silent e).

5a. Singular nouns ending in *-i* usually add *-s*.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| alibi | alibis |
| rabbi | rabbis |
| salami | salamis |
| ski | skis |
| taxi | taxis |

5b. Words ending in a vowel plus *-o* add *-s*.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| bamboo | bamboos |
| cameo | cameos |
| cuckoo | cuckoos |
| folio | folios |
| kangaroo | kangaroos |
| patio | patios |
| radio | radios |
| ratio | ratios |
| shampoo | shampoos |
| stereo | stereos |
| studio | studios |
| tattoo | tattoos |
| zoo | zoos |

5c. Many words ending in a consonant plus *-o* add *-s*.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| avocado | avocados |
| concerto | concertos |
| condo | condos |
| demo | demos |
| ego | egos |
| embryo | embryos |
| hairdo | hairdos |
| kilo | kilos |
| photo | photos |
| piano | pianos |
| solo | solos |
| soprano | sopranos |
| tango | tangos |

5d. Some words ending in a consonant plus -o add -es.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| echo | echoes |
| embargo | embargoes |
| hero | heroes |
| mosquito | mosquitoes |
| potato | potatoes |
| tomato | tomatoes |
| torpedo | torpedoes |
| veto | vetoes |
| volcano | volcanoes |

5e. Some words ending in -o add either -s or -es.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| banjo | banjos*/banjoes |
| cargo | cargos/cargoes* |
| commando | commando*/commandoes |
| halo | halos*/haloes |
| motto | mottos/mottoes* |
| tornado | tornados/tornadoes* |
| zero | zeros*/zeroes |

***Preferred Form**

5f. Nouns that end in -a, -ee, -ie, and -u add -s.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| arena | arenas |
| bee | bees |
| coma | comas |
| cookie | cookies |
| guinea | guineas |
| guru | gurus |
| hernia | hernias |
| knee | knees |
| menu | menus |
| movie | movies |
| nominee | nominees |
| tea | teas |

B. Irregular Plurals

1. Plurals formed by adding **-(r)en**.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| brother | brothers/brethren* |
| child | children |
| ox | oxen |

***Used only in a religious sense nowadays.**

2. Plurals formed by a change of the medial vowel.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| foot | feet |
| goose | geese |
| louse | lice |
| man | men |
| mouse | mice |
| tooth | teeth |
| woman | women |

3. Nouns which retain the singular form in the plural (zero plural).

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| deer | deer |
| moose | moose |
| salmon | salmon |
| sheep | sheep |
| trout | trout |

4. Nouns which have the regular plural and zero plural.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| antelope | antelopes/antelope |
| crab | crabs/crab |
| duck | ducks (farm)/duck (wild) |
| elk | elks/elk |
| flounder | flounders/flounder |
| herring | herrings/herring |
| reindeer | reindeers/reindeer |

C. Foreign Plurals

1. Many Latin nouns that end in **-us** form their plurals by adding the regular English plural ending **-es**.

| Singular | Plural |
|------------|--------------|
| bonus | bonuses |
| campus | campuses |
| chorus | choruses |
| circus | circuses |
| prospectus | prospectuses |
| virus | viruses |

2. Other Latin nouns that end in **-us** have two forms: a regular English plural and the Latin plural.

| Singular | English Plural | Latin Plural |
|-----------|----------------|----------------------|
| apparatus | apparatuses | apparatus |
| cactus | cactus | cacti (preferred) |
| corpus | corpuses | corpora |
| focus | focuses | foci |
| fungus | funguses | fungi (preferred) |
| nucleus | nucleuses | nuclei |
| radius | radiuses | radii |
| stylus | styluses | styli |
| syllabus | syllabuses | syllabi |
| terminus | terminuses | termini |

3. Other nouns derived from Latin that end in **-us** form their plurals by adding **-i** or **-ra**.

| Singular | Latin Plural |
|----------------|---------------|
| bacillus | bacilli |
| coccus | cocci |
| genus | genera |
| locus | loci |
| opus | opera |
| pneumococcus | pneumococci |
| staphylococcus | staphylococci |
| stimulus | stimuli |
| streptococcus | streptococci |

4. Latin nouns ending in *-a* usually add *-es* to form the plural.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| area | areas |
| arena | arenas |
| dilemma | dilemmas |
| diploma | diplomas |
| drama | dramas |
| encyclopedia | encyclopedias |
| era | eras |
| idea | ideas |
| panorama | panoramas |
| quota | quotas |
| retina | retinas |
| sofa | sofas |
| sonata | sonatas |
| umbrella | umbrellas |
| villa | villas |

5. Some Latin nouns ending in *-a* have both the English and Latin plural.

| Singular | English Plural | Latin Plural |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| antenna | antennas (radio & TV) | antennae (biology) |
| formula | formulas (preferred) | formulae |
| nebula | nebulas | nebulae |
| vertebra | vertebras | vertebrae (preferred) |

6. A few Latin nouns ending in *-a* have only the Latin Plural.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| alga | algae |
| larva | larvae |

7. To refer to a person who has graduated from college, a form of the word *alumnus* is often used.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| One male graduate: | alumnus |
| Two or more male graduates: | alumni |
| One female graduate: | alumna |
| Two or more female graduates: | alumnae |

Note: One can avoid confusing these forms by using the word *graduate(s)* instead.

8. Latin nouns ending in **-ex** and **-ix** usually have two plural forms: one regular English plural and a Latin plural formed by changing **-ex** or **-ix** to **-ices**.

| Singular | English Plural | Latin Plural |
|----------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| apex | apexes | apices |
| appendix | appendixes (anatomy) | appendices (books) |
| codex | | codices |
| index | indexes | indices (mathematics) |
| matrix | matrixes | matrices |
| vertex | vertexes | vertices |
| vortex | vortexes | vortices |

9. Many nouns of Latin origin ending in **-um** have a regular English plural and a Latin plural ending in **-a**. Others in this group have only the English plural, and still others have only the Latin plural.

| Singular | English Plural | Latin Plural |
|------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| aquarium | aquariums | aquaria |
| curriculum | curriculum | curricula |
| medium | mediums (spiritualist) | media (radio, TV, etc.) |
| memorandum | memorandums | memoranda |
| moratorium | moratoriums | moratoria |
| stadium | stadiums (sports) | stadia (Roman measurement) |
| stratum | stratums | strata (preferred) |
| symposium | symposiums | symposia |

| Singular | English Plural |
|---------------|----------------|
| album | albums |
| asylum | asylums |
| chrysanthemum | chrysanthemums |
| forum | forums |
| museum | museums |
| ultimatum | ultimatums |

| Singular | Latin Plural |
|-------------|--------------|
| addendum | addenda |
| bacterium | bacteria |
| corrigendum | corrigenda |
| datum | data* |
| desideratum | desiderata |
| erratum | errata |
| ovum | ova |
| stratum | strata |

***Data is often used as a singular noun instead of datum.**

10. Nouns derived from the Greek ending in **-is change **-is** to **-es** (pronounced /iz/) to form the plural.**

| Singular | Greek Plural |
|-------------|--------------|
| analysis | analyses |
| axis | axes |
| basis | bases |
| crisis | crises |
| diagnosis | diagnoses |
| ellipsis | ellipses |
| hypothesis | hypotheses |
| oasis | oases |
| parenthesis | parentheses |
| synopsis | synopses |
| thesis | theses |

Note: *Metropolis* has a regular English plural *metropolises*.

Note: The plural of *basis* is pronounced /**bɛɪ sɪz**/, but the plural of *base* is pronounced /**bɛɪ sɪz**/.

11. Many Greek nouns ending in **-on form regular English plurals by adding **-s**. Others change the **-on** to **-a**. A few have both forms.**

| Singular | Plural |
|----------|-----------|
| demon | demons |
| electron | electrons |
| neutron | neutrons |
| proton | protons |

| Singular | Greek Plural |
|------------|--------------|
| criterion | criteria |
| phenomenon | phenomena |

| Singular | English Plural | Greek Plural |
|-----------|----------------|--------------|
| automaton | automatons | automata |
| ganglion | ganglions | ganglia |

12. Greek nouns ending in **-ma have a regular English plural and a Greek plural ending in **-mata**.**

| Singular | English Plural | Greek Plural |
|----------|----------------|--------------|
| dogma | *dogmas | dogmata** |
| schema | schemas | *schemata |
| stigma | stigmas | stigmata |
| stoma | stomas | *stomata |

*Preferred form

**Rare

- 13. Nouns of French origin ending in **-eau** have a regular plural ending in **-s** and a French plural ending in **-eaux**. Both plurals are pronounced /z/.**

| Singular | English Plural | French Plural |
|-----------|----------------|---------------|
| adieu | adieux* | adieux |
| bureau | bureaus* | bureaux |
| plateau | plateaus* | plateaux |
| tableau | tableaus | tableaux* |
| trousseau | trousseaus | trousseaux* |

***Preferred form**

- 14. Some nouns derived from French ending in **-s** or **-x** have the same form in both singular and plural; however, in speech the ending is pronounced /z/ in the plural.**

| Singular | Plural |
|----------|----------|
| chamois | chamois |
| chassis | chassis |
| corps | corps |
| faux pas | faux pas |
| patois | patois |

- 15. Some nouns of Italian origin ending in **-o** have an Italian plural ending in **-i**.**

| Singular | English Plural | Italian Plural |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| graffito (archeology) | -- | graffiti |
| libretto | *librettos | libretti |
| solo | *solos | solì** |
| soprano | sopranos | -- |
| tempo | *tempos | tempi |
| virtuoso | *virtuosos | virtuosi |

***Preferred form**

****Rare**

- 16. Some nouns of Hebrew origin have a regular English plural and a Hebrew plural ending in **-im**; others have only the Hebrew plural.**

| Singular | English Plural | Hebrew Plural |
|----------|----------------|---------------|
| cherub | cherubs | cherubim |
| seraph | seraphs | seraphim |
| teraph | | teraphim* |
| kibbutz | | kibbutzim |

***Usually used in the plural**

C. Proper Nouns

Most proper nouns have regular plurals, even nouns ending in consonant + **-y**.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Brady | the Bradys |
| Germany | the two Germanys |
| Kennedy | the Kennedys |

Exceptions:

| Singular | Plural |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Allegheny Mountains | Alleghenies |
| Rocky Mountains | Rockies |

D. Compounds

Compound nouns usually form their plural by pluralizing the most important word.

1. Compound nouns which pluralize the first word.

| Singular | Plural |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| attorney general | attorneys general |
| brother-in-law | brothers-in-law |
| commander-in-chief | commanders-in-chief |
| consul general | consuls general |
| court-martial | courts-martial |
| father-in-law | fathers-in-law |
| hanger-on | hangers-on |
| lady-in-waiting | ladies-in-waiting |
| maid of honor | maids of honor |
| man-at-arms | men-at-arms |
| man-of-war | men-of-war |
| mother-in-law | mothers-in-law |
| notary public | notaries public |
| passer-by | passers-by |
| poet laureate | poets laureate |
| sister-in-law | sisters-in-law |

2. Examples of the types of compound nouns which pluralize the last word.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| apple tree | apple trees |
| close-up | close-ups |
| fountain pen | fountain pens |
| shut-in | shut-ins |

3. Compounds written as one word add the plural to the end of the word.

| Singular | Plural |
|-----------------|---------------|
| bucketful | bucketfuls |
| cupful | cupfuls |
| journeyman | journeymen |
| spoonful | spoonfuls |
| stepchild | stepchildren |
| stowaway | stowaways |
| toothpick | toothpicks |

3. Compound nouns which pluralize both words.

| Singular | Plural |
|------------------|-------------------|
| gentleman farmer | gentlemen farmers |
| manservant | menservants |
| woman doctor | women doctors |

E. Numbers, Letters, Words, and Symbols

1. The plural of numbers and abbreviations is formed by adding 's (traditional) or only -s (recent trend).

in the 1930's or 1930s
to count by 10's or 10s
to know your ABC's or ABCs
two MP's or MPs

2. The plural of letters, symbols, and words used as examples is formed by adding 's.

Cross your t's and dot your i's.
The border consisted of a series of ♦'s.
There are too many *and*'s in this sentence.
There were two large X's on the map.

Note: Do not add an apostrophe to a number that is written out.

The gymnast scored three tens in the competition.

If you are not sure about a plural or its meaning, consult a good dictionary.

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