Basic grammar rules: plural in English

This is a lesson about the plural in English: how to form the plural of regular and irregular English names.

Plural in regular English

The plural is usually formed with an -s at the end of the singular name:

- book → books
- dog → dogs
- river → rivers
- horse → horses
- hat → hats
- cup → cups
- bag → bags
- boat → boats

Be careful, for names that end in -s, -sh, -ch, -ch, -x, -z or -o, the plural mark is -es:

- watch → watches
- bus → buses
- church → churches
- box → boxes
- witch → witches
- dress → dresses
- beach → beaches
- kiss → kisses
- table → tables
- potato → potatoes
- hero → heroes
- echo → echoes

Some words ending with -o take a -s in the plural:

- Zoo → Zoos
- Photo → Photos
- Piano → Pianos
- Auto → Autos
- Pro → Pros
- Tattoo → Tattoos
- Solo → Solos
- Kangaroo → Kangaroos
- Kilo → Kilos
- Memo → Memos
- Studio → Studios
- Video → Videos
Some words ending with -o may have a -s or -es in the plural (both are correct):

- buffalo → buffalos / buffaloes
- no → nos / noes
- tornado → tornados / tornadoes
- volcano → volcanos / volcanoes
- zero → zeros / zeroes
- cargo → cargos / cargoes
- mosquito → mosquitoes / mosquitos
- halo → halos / haloes

For names ending in -y, it must be replaced by -ies:

- baby → babies
- party → parties
- cherry → cherries
- fly → flies
- cry → cries
- lady → ladies
- entry → entries
- city → cities

But if the -y is preceded by a vowel, just add a -s:

- boy → boys
- toy → toys
- key → keys
- way → ways
- storey → storeys
- day → days
- tray → trays
- donkey → donkeys

For names that end in -f or -fe, the plural mark is -ves:

- wife → wives
- knife → knives
- leaf → leaves
- thief → thieves
- loaf → loaves
- shelf → shelves
- self → selves
- half → halves
- wolf → wolves

Some exceptions: belief, chief, cliff, proof, roof, oaf and safe take only one -s.

Plural in irregular English

Some names change significantly in the plural:
• man → men
• woman → women
• child → children
• person → people
• foot → feet
• tooth → teeth
• goose → geese
• mouse → mice
• louse → lice
• ox → oxen

But some names have the same form in the singular and plural: no need for -s at the end!

• sheep → sheep (NOT sheeps)
• fish → fish (NOT fishes)
• information → information (NOT informations)
• hair → hair (NOT hairs)

and so on for salmon, deer, aircraft, series, species, species, furniture and luggage, they never take -s in the plural!!!

Family names (surnames) take one -s in the plural:

• I went to the Smiths for dinner last night.
• The Simpsons.

Some Greek or Latin words may keep their original plural:

• basis → bases
• hypothesis → hypotheses
• analysis → analyses
• crisis → crises
• diagnosis → diagnoses
• thesis → theses
• referendum → referenda
• phenomenon → phenomena

Measurements or cardinal numbers have regular plurals when used alone. If they are preceded by a number or many, they keep their singular form.

Ex: thousand, hundred, pound, foot and stone.

• thousand | thousands
• hundred | hundreds

⚠ The termination -s is not necessarily the mark of the plural. Some nouns in -s are uncountable nouns that are always followed by a verb in the singular:

- Names of diseases:
- Measles
- Mumps
- Shingles

- Game names:
  - Billiards
  - Dominoes
  - Darts

- Names of materials:
  - Physics
  - Mathematics
  - Linguistics

Objects composed of several parts always have the termination -s

- Trousers
- Tweezers
- Scissors
- Glasses

They are often preceded by - a pair of:

Ex: A pair of scissors

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