

Correct Plural Forms

Notice the change of form in the second word of each pair:

Tree (Box, ox, Man)

Trees (Boxes, Oxen, Men)

[The first word of each pair denotes one thing]

[The second word of each pair denotes more than one]

A Noun that denotes one person or thing, is said to be in the Singular Number;

Boy, girl, cow, bird, tree, book, pen.

A Noun that denotes more than one person or thing, is said to be in the Plural Number;

Boys, girls, cows, birds, trees, books, pens.

The formation of plural noun:

(a) The Plural of nouns is generally formed by adding -s to the singular

Boy, boys; pen, pens; girl, girls; desk, desks;

Book, books; cow, cows.

(b) But Nouns ending in -s, -sh, -ch (soft), or -x form the plural by adding -es to the singular:

Class, classes; kiss, kisses; dish, dishes; brush, brushes;

(c) Most Nouns ending in -o also forms the plural by adding -es to the singular:

Buffalo, buffaloes; mango, mangoes; hero, heroes;

Potato, potatoes; cargo, cargoes, echo, echoes;

Negro, Negroes: volcano, volcanoes.

(d) A few nouns ending in -o merely add -s:

dynamo, dynamos; solo, solos; ratio, ratios; canto, cantos; memento, mementos;

quarto, quartos; piano, pianos; photo, photos; stereo, stereos. Kilo, kilos; logo, logos;

commando, commandos

(e) Nouns ending in -y, preceded by a consonant, form their plural by changing -y into -i and adding -es:

Baby, babies; lady, ladies; city, cities; army, armies; story, stories; pony, ponies.

(f) The following nouns ending in -f or -fe form their plural by changing -for -fe into v and adding -es:

thief, thieves; wife, wives; wolf, wolves; life, lives; calf, calves; leaf, leaves; loaf, loaves; knife, knives; shelf, shelves, half, halves; elf, elves; self, selves; sheaf, sheaves.

(g) The nouns dwarf, hoof, scarf and wharf take either -s or -ves in the plural.

Dwarfs or dwarves; hoofs or hooves;

Scarfs or scarves; wharfs or wharves

Other words ending in -for -fe add -s; as,

Chief, chiefs; safe, safes; proof, proofs gulf, gulfs; cliff, cliffs; handkerchief, handkerchiefs

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

man, men; woman, women; foot, feet; tooth, teeth; goose, geese; mouse, mice; louse, lice.

(i) There are a few nouns that form their plural by adding -en to the singular

Ox, oxen; child, children.

The plural of fish is fish or fishes.

(j) Some nouns have the singular and the plural alike;

Swine, sheep, deer; cod, trout, salmon: aircraft, spacecraft, series, species. Pair, dozen, score, gross, hundred, thousand (when used after numerals)

The use of nouns:

Some nouns are used only in the plural.

- Names of instruments which have two parts forming a kind of pair; as, Bellows, scissors, tongs, pincers, spectacles.
- Names of certain articles of dress; as, Trousers, drawers, breeches, jeans, tights, shorts, pyjamas.
- Certain other nouns; as, Annals, thanks, proceeds (of a sale), tidings, environs, nuptials, obsequies, assets, chattels.

Some nouns originally singular are now generally used in the plural

Alms, riches, eaves.

The following nouns look plural but are in fact singular:

Mathematics, physics, electronics, news, measles, mumps, rickets, billiards, draughts
Means' is used either as singular or plural. But when it has the meaning of 'wealth' it is always plural; as, He succeeded by this means (or, by these means) in passing the examination. His means are small, but he has incurred no debt.]

Certain Collective Nouns, though singular in form, are always used as plurals,

Poultry, cattle, vermin, people, gentry. These poultry are mine. Whose are these cattle?
Vermin destroy our property and carry disease. Who are those people (= persons)? There are few gentry in this town.

A Compound Noun generally forms its plural by adding -s to the principal word

Singular	→	Plural
Commander-in-chief	→	Commanders-in-chief
Coat-of-mail	→	Coats-of-mail
Son-in-Law	→	Sons-in-law
Daughter-in-law	→	Daughters-in-law
Step-son	→	Step-sons
Step-daughter	→	Step-daughters
Maid-servant	→	Maid-servants (but man-servant, plural men-servants)
Passer-by	→	Passers-by
Looker-on	→	Lookers-on
Man-of-war	→	Men-of-war.

We say spoonfuls and handfuls, because spoonful and handful are regarded as one word.