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;
- Scarf’s or scarves;
- warfs 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.

The plural of some nouns is: 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**

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

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