

Lesson 5

Singular and plural nouns

Definition: Singular nouns represent only one thing, but plural nouns represent more than one. If someone stands alone we call them a “person” (singular), but if there's more than one person, we call them “people” (plural).

Rule 1. By adding -es to nouns ending in -ch, -sh, -ss, -s, -x, -z		
Singular	Plural	
dress	dress es	
box	box es	
dish	dish es	
watch	watch es	
buzz	buzz es	

Rule 2. By adding -es to nouns ending in -o		
Singular	Plural	
potato	potato es	
tomato	tomato es	
hero	hero es	
torpedo	torpedo es	
echo	echo es	
embargo	embargo es	
veto	veto es	
Negro	Negro es	

Rule 3. By adding -s to nouns ending in -o		
Singular	Plural	
bamboo	bamboos	
kangaroo	kangaroos	
radio	radios	
studio	studios	
zoo	zoos	
kilo	kilos	
photo	photos	
piano	pianos	
concerto	concertos	
Eskimo	Eskimos	

Rule 4. A group of nouns ending in -o can pluralize in two ways (-s or -es)			
Singular	Plural		
avocado	avocadoes	avocados	
buffalo	buffaloes	buffalos	
cargo	cargoes	cargos	
domino	dominoes	dominos	
ghetto	ghettoes	ghettos	
flamingo	flamingoes	flamingos	
mango	mangoes	mangos	
mosquito	mosquitoes	mosquitos	
motto	mottoes	mottos	
tornado	tornadoes	tornados	
volcano	volcanoes	volcanos	
zero	zeroes	zeros	

Rule 5. By adding -ies if the noun ends in -y preceded by a consonant

Singular	Plural	
body	bod ies	
lady	lad ies	
lorry	lorr ies	
baby	bab ies	
army	arm ies	
country	countr ies	

Rule 6. By adding -s if the noun ends in -y preceded by a vowel

Singular	Plural	
boy	bo ys	
toy	to ys	
joy	jo ys	
play	pl ays	
monkey	monke ys	

Rule 7. By adding -es if the noun ends in -f, -fe

Singular	Plural	
thief	thiev es	
wolf	wolv es	
shelf	shelv es	
half	halv es	
leaf	leav es	
wife	wiv es	
knife	kniv es	
dwarf	dwar fs / dwar ves	

hoof	hoofs / hooves	
scarf	scarfs / scarves	
wharf	wharfs / wharves	
Exceptions: roofs, proofs, chiefs, safes, cliffs, gulfs, reefs, beliefs, briefs, cuffs, plaintiffs, sheriffs, whiffs...		

Rule 8. Nouns of Latin and Greek origin		
Singular	Plural	
man	men	
woman	women	
tooth	teeth	
foot	feet	
goose	geese	
mouse	mice	
louse	lice	
child	children	
ox	oxen	

Rule 9. Coincidence of singular and plural forms		
Singular	Plural	
sheep	sheep	
swine	swine	
deer	deer	
grouse	grouse	
series	series	
species	species	
corps	corps	
salmon	salmon	

fish	fish	
aircraft	aircraft	
spacecraft	spacecraft	

Rule 10. Plural names of some nationalities ending in –ese, -ss, -sh, -ch, -i

Singular	Plural	
a Chinese	The Chinese	
a Japanese	The Japanese	
a Portuguese	The Portuguese	
a Swiss	The Swiss	
a French	The French	
a Scottish	the Scottish	
an Iraqi	The Iraqi	
an Israeli	The Israeli	
a Polish	The Polish	
a British	The British	
a Dutch	The Dutch	

Rule 11. Plural names of some nationalities ending in – (i) an and other endings...

Singular	Plural	
a Russian	The Russians	
an Azerbaijani	The Azerbaijanis	
an American	The Americans	
a Ukrainian	The Ukrainians	
a Brazilian	The Brazilians	
an Italian	The Italians	

a Briton	The Britons	
a Swede	The Swedes	
a Spaniard	The Spaniards	

Memorize: names of some nationalities / countries / languages		
Nationality	Country	Language
British	United Kingdom	English
Scottish	Scotland	English / Gaelic
Irish	Northern Ireland	English
Welsh	Wales	English / Welsh
Danish	Denmark	Danish
Finnish	Finland	Finnish
Norwegian	Norway	Norwegian
Swedish	Sweden	Swedish
Swiss	Switzerland	German / French / Italian
Estonian	Estonia	Estonian
Latvian	Latvia	Latvian
Lithuanian	Lithuania	Lithuanian
Austrian	Austria	German
Belgian	Belgium	French / Flemish
French	France	French
German	Germany	German
Italian	Italy	Italian
Dutch	Netherlands	Dutch
American	United States	English
Canadian	Canada	English / French
Mexican	Mexico	Spanish
Ukrainian	Ukraine	Ukrainian
Russian	Russia	Russian
Belarusian	Belarus	Belarusian
Polish	Poland	Polish
Czech	Czech Republic	Czech
Slovak / Slovakian	Slovakia	Slovakian
Hungarian	Hungary	Hungarian
Romanian	Romania	Romanian
Bulgarian	Bulgaria	Bulgarian
Greek	Greece	Greek
Spanish	Spain	Spanish

List of the most common nationalities in singular and plural			
Country	Adjective	Singular	Plural
Algeria	Algerian	an Algerian	the Algerians
Australia	Australian	an Australian	the Australians
America/the USA	American	an American	the Americans
Belgium	Belgian	a Belgian	the Belgians
Brazil	Brazilian	a Brazilian	the Brazilians
Europe	European	a European	the Europeans
Italy	Italian	an Italian	the Italians
Hungary	Hungarian	a Hungarian	the Hungarians
Morocco	Moroccan	a Moroccan	the Moroccans
Norway	Norwegian	a Norwegian	the Norwegians
Greece	Greek	a Greek	the Greeks
Iraq	Iraqi	an Iraqi	the Iraqis
Israel	Israeli	an Israeli	the Israelis
Thailand	Thai	a Thai	the Thais
China	Chinese	a Chinese	the Chinese
Portugal	Portuguese	a Portuguese	the Portuguese
Russia	Russian	a Russian	the Russians
Slovakia	Slovaks	a Slovak	the Slovaks
Switzerland	Swiss	a Swiss	the Swiss

Rule 12. Plural nouns formed according to the rules of Greek or Latin languages		
Singular	Plural	
basis	bases	
crisis	crises	
phenomenon	phenomena	
stimulus	stimuli	
formula	formulae	
datum	data	

index	indices	
hypothesis	hypotheses	
parenthesis	parentheses	
analysis	analyses	
bacterium	bacteria	
medium	media	
forum	fora	
alumnus	alumni	
cactus	cacti	
fungus	fungi	
appendix	appendices	
larva	larvae	
criterion	criteria	
matrix	matrices	
thesis	theses	

Rule 13. Admissibility plural formation according to the rules of English grammar

Singular	Plural	
formula	formulae / formulas	
focus	foci / focuses	
forum	fora / forums	
cactus	cacti / cactuses	
appendix	appendices / appendixes	

Rule 14. Plural form of compound nouns

Singular	Plural	
housewife	housewives	
schoolchild	schoolchildren	
dining-room	dining-rooms	
babysitter	babysitters	
earring	earrings	
bookcase	bookcases	
toothbrush	toothbrushes	

Rule 15. Plural form of compound nouns with the first element man / woman

Singular	Plural	
woman-writer	women-writers	
man-driver	men-drivers	

Rule 16. Plural form of compound nouns with a hyphen

Singular	Plural	
mother-in-law	mothers-in-law	
hotel-keeper	hotel-keepers	
gas-mask	gas-masks	

Rule 17. If the compound word does not have a noun element

Singular	Plural	
forget-me-not	forget-me-nots	
drop-out	drop-outs	
go-between	go-betweens	

Rule 18. Nouns used in singular only

Singular	Plural	
gold	-	
silver	-	
oil	-	
music	-	
information	-	
progress	-	
knowledge	-	
news	-	
works	-	
barracks	-	

Rule 19. Nouns used in plural only

Singular	Plural	
-	scissors	
-	scales	
-	spectacles	
-	trousers	
-	The Netherlands	
-	customs	
-	outskirts	
-	goods	
-	contents	
-	clothes	

-	proceeds	
-	riches	
-	police	

Rule 20. The names of some sciences with endings –ics, -s are used in the singular

Singular	Plural	
physics	-	
mathematics	-	
phonetics	-	
linguistics	-	

Rule 21. Plural form of such nouns like *dozen, score, hundred, thousand*

Singular	Plural	
dozen	four dozen eggs, dozens of boxes	
score	scores of people	
hundred	hundreds of letters	
thousand	thousands of flowers	

Rule 22. Using nouns after constructions a number & the number

Constructions	Examples	Rules
a number of	A number of people have applied for this job. A number of houses are being built in this area.	"A number of" takes a plural verb
the number of	The number of people, who applied for the job, was enormous. The number of new houses in this area is growing.	"The number of" takes a singular verb

Note: People is the plural of person that's most commonly used in everyday communication to simply refer to multiple humans. But people can also be used as a singular noun to refer to a population or particular community.

Rule 23. Nouns that have two plural forms that differ in meaning		
Singular	Plural	Translation
antenna	antennas	антенны (радио, телевизионные)
	antennae	усики у насекомых
brother	brothers	братья (сыновья одних родителей)
	brethren	собратья (по религии, убеждениям)
cloth	cloths	типы тканей
	clothes	одежда
index	indexes	указатели, каталоги
	indices	в математике
penny	pennies	несколько монет по одному пенни
	pence	совокупность пенсов (о стоимости), цент