

# Forming Plurals

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# The Basic Rule

Most common nouns form their plurals by adding s  
(e.g. student – students).

However, there are a few additional rules...

# Nouns that end in...

s, sh, ch, x, z: Nouns that end in s, sh, ch, x, z form their plurals by adding *es* (e.g. box – boxes).

y: For words ending in y, look at the letter that precedes y, if it is a vowel, just add s (e.g. attorney – attorneys); if y is preceded by a consonant, change y to *i* and add *es* (family – families).

# Nouns that end in...

o: When a word ending in o is related to music or art, just add s (e.g. piano – pianos). When the final o is preceded by a vowel, just add s (e.g. radio – radios). When the short form of a word is used, just add s (e.g. photo – photos). When the final o is preceded by a consonant, add es (e.g. cargo – cargoes).

f or fe: There are no clear cut rules for words ending in f or fe. You might have to use the dictionary (e.g. thief – thieves; knife – knives; roof – roofs; chief – chiefs).

# Additional Rules

Singular Nouns: Some nouns are always singular and take singular verbs (e.g. civics, aerobics).

Plural Nouns: Some nouns are always plural and take plural verbs (e.g. credentials; premises).

Compound Nouns: In compound nouns, make the most important word plural (eg. Editors in chief; roommates).

Nouns that change Basic Form: Some words change their basic form when they become plural (e.g. man – men; mouse - mice).

# Additional Rules

Foreign Nouns: Plurals of foreign nouns do not follow a rule and thus need to be learned (e.g. analysis – analyses; alumnus – alumni; datum – data).

One Form: Some nouns have only one form that is used for singular and plural (e.g. deer; politics; odds; corps).

Numbers in Combination: When using numbers as modifiers, do not use their plural form (two dozen donuts; five hundred participants).

Special Plurals: Apostrophes are used to form plurals of lowercase individual letters and lowercase abbreviations (e.g. p's and q's; c.o.d.'s), but not capital abbreviations (e.g. CPAs). Also, Courtesy titles (Mr. – Messrs; Miss – Misses; Dr. - Drs; Ms. – Mses or Mss; Mrs. - Mmes)

# Examples

child → children

studio → studios

solo → solos

foot → feet

potato → potatoes

loaf → loaves

laundry → laundries

inch → inches

IRA → IRAs

sister-in-law → sisters-  
in-law

salmon → salmon

series → series

cupful → cupfuls

secretary → secretaries

trout → trout

CEO → CEOs

criterion → criterions

belief → beliefs

Ms. → Mses

bacterium → bacteria