

Grammar Forming Plurals

Plurals let readers know if words refer to a single object or many objects.

GENERAL RULES

ADDING -S

Most words are made plural simply by adding *-s* to the end of the word.

EXAMPLES: girl → girls
apple → apples

WORDS ENDING IN *-SH*, *-S*, *-CH*, *-X*, OR *-Z*

When a word ends in *-ch*, *-s*, *-sh*, *-x*, or *-z*, its plural is formed by adding *-es* to the word.

EXAMPLES: iris → irises
ash → ashes

PLURALS FORMED BY INTERNAL CHANGES

Some words do not use *-s* or *-es* to form plurals. They change into new words as plurals.

EXAMPLES: child → children
man → men
person → people

PLURALS THAT RETAIN THEIR SINGULAR FORM

Some plurals retain their singular form. Such nouns are spelled the same whether they are being used in a singular or plural sense. Often, they are names of animals or grains.

EXAMPLES: corn → corn
fish → fish

COMPOUND WORDS

Plurals of compound words use an *-s* or *-es* at the end of the entire compound word.

EXAMPLES: checkbook → checkbooks
warm-up → warm-ups

However, when the major word in the compound word is the first word, add the *-s* or *-es* to the first word.

EXAMPLES: mile per hour → miles per hour
sister-in-law → sisters-in-law

WORDS ENDING IN *-O*

ADDING -S

Most words ending in *-o* are made plural with the addition of *-s*.

EXAMPLES: zoo → zoos
radio → radios

Grammar Forming Plurals

ADDING -ES

A few words ending in *-o* are made plural with the addition of *-es*. These words have a consonant before the final *-o*.

EXAMPLES: tomato → tomatoes
hero → heroes

ADDING EITHER -S OR -ES

A few words ending in an *-o* that is preceded by a consonant may be made plural by adding either *-s* or *-es*. Always be consistent in the form you use.

EXAMPLES: tornado → tornados → tornadoes
zero → zeros → zeroes

WORDS ENDING IN *F* OR *FE*

ADDING -S OR -ES

Words ending in *-f* or *-fe* become plural with the addition of *-s* or *-es*. Generally, when forming these plurals, the *-f* is changed to a *-v* before adding the *-s* or *-es*.

EXAMPLES: leaf → leaves
wife → wives

Exceptions to this rule appear often. In these cases, the *-f* is not replaced with a *-v* when the plural ending is added. Generally, these exceptions exist to avoid confusion. For example, the exceptions below prevent confusion with the singular verbs *believes* and *saves* and with the plural noun *motives*.

EXAMPLES: belief → beliefs
safe → safes
motif → motifs

LATIN WORDS ENDING IN -UM

ADDING A

For some Latin words ending in *-um*, the plural is formed by changing the *-um* to *-a*. However, not all words ending in *-um* follow this rule. When in doubt, check a dictionary.

EXAMPLES: curriculum → curricula

LATIN WORDS ENDING IN -US

ADDING I

Latin words ending in *-us* are made plural by changing the *-us* to *-i*. Again, not all words ending in *-us* follow this pattern.

EXAMPLES: syllabus → syllabi
cactus → cacti

NOTE: When in doubt about forming plurals, always check a dictionary.