Plurals and Possessives

**Plural nouns** (more than one)

1. Most nouns are regular, and form their plurals with an *s*:

   - needles, books, houses, the Smiths
   - pins, judges, ceilings, the Lawsons
   - keys, plays, envoys, toys

   For nouns ending in *ch, sh, s, x,* and *z,* add *es*:

   - churches, gases, taxes, the Joneses
   - bushes, crosses, waltzes, the Metzes

2. Nouns **ending in *y* preceded by a consonant** change the *y* to *i* and add *es*:

   - lady – ladies
   - remedy – remedies
   - memory – memories
   - lily – lilies
   - laundry – laundries
   - facility – facilities
   - supply – supplies
   - luxury – luxuries
   - penny – pennies

   **NOTE:** All **names** ending in *y* form the plural by adding *s*.

3. Nouns **ending in *o* preceded by a vowel** add *s*:

   - rodeo – rodeos
   - radio – radios
   - cameo – cameos
   - studio – studios

   Nouns **ending in *o* preceded by a consonant** vary. Some add *s,* others *es,* and still others add either *s* or *es*:

   **With *s*:**
   - piano – pianos
   - solo – solos

   **With *es*:**
   - echo – echoes
   - hero – heroes

   **With *s* and *es*:**
   - cargo – cargos - cargoes
   - mosquito -mosquitos-mosquitoes

4. Nouns **ending in *f* and *fe** also vary:

   **With *s*:**
   - roof – roofs
   - fife – fifes
   - dwarf – dwarfs

   **With *ves*:**
   - self – selves
   - thief – thieves
   - knife – knives

   **With *s* or *ves*:**
   - hoof – hoofs – hooves
   - scarf – scarfs – scarves
   - wharf – wharfs – wharves
5 Some nouns form their plural by a change in spelling:

child – children  ox – oxen  woman – women
mouse – mice  louse – lice  freshman – freshmen
tooth – teeth  goose – geese  foot – feet

6 Other nouns that have been borrowed from foreign languages have English plural endings, others have foreign endings, and still others have both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Foreign Plural</th>
<th>English Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alumnus</td>
<td>alumni</td>
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<tr>
<td>campus</td>
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<td>alumna</td>
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<tr>
<td>forum</td>
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<td>forums</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In scientific and formal writing the foreign plurals of words that have both forms are more likely to be used; but in other situations the English plurals are more common and are the appropriate forms for you to use.

NOTE: Some modern writers use data and media as collective nouns (a collective noun names a group of persons or things - as class, team, committee - with a singular idea). These writers, therefore, use a singular verb with data and media, e.g. This data is incomplete.

Titles and Names

With titles such as Mr. and Ms. pluralize the last name.
When there is a title with a name, doctor for example, either the name or the title may be made plural. Never pluralize both the name and the title.

Mr. Ogden       The two Mr. Ogden's
Mrs. Tate       The Mrs. Tates are sisters
Ms. Weinberg    The Ms. Weinbergs married brothers
Doctor Nye      The Doctors Nye or the Doctor Nyes
Figures, Letters, Words, and Symbols

The plurals of letters, figures, symbols, signs and words referred to as words are formed in the normal way by adding **s** or **es**:

- Malcolm had only two Bs this term.
- Everything seems to be at sixes and sevens. (OR 6s and 7s).
- You have too many **ands** in that sentence.

Sometimes, the addition of a simple **s** may form another word or may confuse the reader. In which case the plural is formed with an **'s**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small letters -</th>
<th>Remember to dot your <strong>i's</strong>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certain letters -</td>
<td>You may not get so many <strong>A's</strong> again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations -</td>
<td>Mr. Clay does not consider <strong>f.o.b.'s</strong> when figuring costs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Compound Nouns**

Compound nouns written as one word form plurals in the regular way:

- stepchild – stepchild**ren**
- fisherman – fisherman**en**
- leftover – leftover**s**
- bookcase – bookcase**s**
- handful – handful**s**
- cupful – cupful**s**

Compound nouns consisting of two or more words, whether hyphenated or unhyphenated, form the plural on the most important, or main, word:

- personnel manager – personnel managers
- editor-in-chief – editors-in-chief
- son-in-law – sons-in-law
- major general – major generals
- board of education – boards of education

**Singular or Plural?**

A few nouns have the same form for both singular and plural:

- athletics
- politics
- deer
- gallows
- Japanese
- Chinese
- series
- vermin
- moose
- headquarters
- chassis
- salmon
Some other nouns are always singular, even some that end in *s*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>statistics</th>
<th>economics</th>
<th>mathematics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>molasses</td>
<td>milk</td>
<td>measles</td>
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<tr>
<td>music</td>
<td>news</td>
<td>civics</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Others are always plural and therefore always take a plural verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>scissors</th>
<th>scales</th>
<th>riches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tidings</td>
<td>trousers</td>
<td>premises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credentials</td>
<td>winnings</td>
<td>thanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belongings</td>
<td>proceeds</td>
<td>tongs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POSSESSIVES (using apostrophes to show ownership)

To show ownership of an object, writers use the possessive form of a noun. Writing the possessive form of a noun is easy! The problems that arise normally come from uncertainty about where to put the apostrophe - before or after the s.

1. For the possessive of singular nouns and indefinite pronouns, add an apostrophe and an s:

   the boy        the boy's bicycle
   the lady      the lady's hat
   a week       a week's work
   the witness  the witness's testimony
   The King of England the King of England's throne
   James        James's report
   his son-in-law his son-in-law's house

   **Exception:** If adding 's to a noun already ending in s makes the word difficult to pronounce, just add an apostrophe at the end of the word like so:

   The Duchess' smile  John Alberts' office
   Moses' journey      Mr. Lucas' salary

2. For plural nouns, add the apostrophe and 's:

   the children       the children's shrieks
   the mice           the mice's tails
   the alumni         the alumni's complaints
   your sisters-in-law your sisters-in-law's quarrels

   **For plural nouns already ending in s, add the apostrophe at the end of the word (after the s, which is already there):**

   the boys          the boys' bicycles
   the ladies        the ladies' hats
   the Higginses     the Higginses' car

3. To show dual ownership of objects, only the last noun is made possessive:

   Hansel and Gretel's escape
   the boys and girls' charity drive

   On the other hand, to show separate ownership each noun is made possessive:

   Hansel's and Gretel's shoes
   the boys' and girls' exhibits
4. Personal pronouns plus the relative and interrogative who have special possessive forms, spelled without an apostrophe:

Possessive form of personal pronouns, add an s without an apostrophe: my (mine), your(s), his, her(s), it(s), our(s), their(s). The personal pronoun –his- is an exception to this rule.

Yes, that is his sports car.
The brand new bike is hers.
The dog’s collar is too loose; it will slide of its head.
This pencil is mine, but where is yours?
Whose scissors are those? Those scissors are ours.
Those books are theirs.