

Singulars and Plurals

Handout courtesy of Lori Williams and Sally Wallace

A noun or pronoun is **singular** when it refers to one person or item.

boy girl captain

A noun or pronoun is **plural** when it refers to more than one person or item.

boys girls captains

Most nouns in English form their plurals by simply adding *s* to the singular. However, nouns that end in **s, sh, ch, x,** and **z** need an **e** before the plural **s** in order to make the plural form of the word possible to pronounce: the **es** provides another syllable.

one witch	two witches
one dress	two dresses
one bush	two bushes
one box	two boxes
one buzz	two buzzes

The plural of common nouns ending in **y** following a consonant is formed by changing the **y** to **i** and adding the ending **es**: one county, ten counties

(Consonants are all the letters of the alphabet except **a, e, i, o,** and **u,** which are vowels.)

This rule doesn't apply to proper nouns: The Flannerys live next door.

If the final **y** follows a vowel, you don't change the **y**. To form the plural, simply add **s** to the singular: **toy + s = toys**

The plural of most nouns ending in **f** is formed by changing the **f** to **v** and adding **es**.

one knife	two knives
one wife	two wives
one loaf	two loaves
one scarf	two scarves
one leaf	two leaves

Note: For some strange reason, the nouns **roof, proof, belief, safe,** and **chief** don't follow this rule, so you have **roofs, proofs, beliefs, safes,** and **chiefs**.

Some nouns have the same form for both singular and plural:

one deer	two deer
one trout	two trout
one sheep	two sheep
one moose	two moose
one fish	two fish

Singular Possessives

To form the possessive of a singular noun, simply add an apostrophe (') and s. the

monkey's paw = the paw of the monkey

Don't worry if the singular form of the noun already ends in s; to make the noun possessive, add the letter "s."

the waitress's smile = the smile of the waitress

the fortress's walls = the walls of the fortress

Mr. Jones's alligator = the alligator of Mr. Jones

Plural Possessives

To form the plural possessive of a noun, first form the plural; if the plural ends in s, merely add an apostrophe after the s.

Singular	Plural	Ending	Add	Plural Possessive
boy	boys	s	'	boys'
boss	bosses	s	'	bosses'
country	countries	s	'	countries'
church	churches	s	'	churches'

the boys' bikes = the bikes of more than one boy

the bosses' limousines = the limousines of more than one boss

the countries' treaty = the treaty of more than one country

the churches' steeples = the steeples of more than one church

If the plural DOESN'T end in s, add an apostrophe and s to form the plural possessive.

Singular	Plural	Ending	Add	Plural Possessive
man	men	not s	's	men's
women	women	not s	's	women's
child	children	not s	's	children's

the men's parachutes = the parachutes of more than one man

the women's portfolios = the portfolios of more than one woman

the children's pizza = the pizza of more than one child