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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Ending</th>
<th>Add</th>
<th>Plural Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boy</td>
<td>boys</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>'</td>
<td>boys'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boss</td>
<td>bosses</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>'</td>
<td>bosses'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>country</td>
<td>countries</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>'</td>
<td>countries'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>church</td>
<td>churches</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>'</td>
<td>churches'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Plural</th>
<th>Ending</th>
<th>Add</th>
<th>Plural Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>not s</td>
<td>'s</td>
<td>men's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>not s</td>
<td>'s</td>
<td>women's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>children</td>
<td>not s</td>
<td>'s</td>
<td>children's</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 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