

CHAPTER 7

THE NOUN : NUMBER

30 Notice the change of form in the second word of each pair.

{ Tree Trees	{ Box Boxes	{ Ox Oxen	{ Man Men
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The first word of each pair denotes *one* thing, the second word of each pair denotes *more than one*.

A Noun that denotes *one* person or thing, is said to be in the **Singular Number**, as,

Boy, girl, cow, bird, tree, book, pen.

A Noun that denotes *more than one* person or thing, is said to be in the **Plural Number** :

Boys, girls, cows, birds, trees, books, pens.

Thus there are two Numbers in English—the Singular and the Plural.

HOW PLURALS ARE FORMED

31. (i) The Plural of nouns is generally formed by adding *-s* to the singular ; as,

boy, boys ;	girl, girls ;	book, books ;
pen, pens ;	desk, desks ;	cow, cows

(ii) But Nouns ending in *-s*, *-sh*, *-ch* (soft), or *-x* form the plural by adding *-es* to the singular ; as,

class, classes ;	kiss, kisses ;	dish, dishes ;
brush, brushes ;	match, matches ;	watch, watches ;
branch, branches ;	tax, taxes ;	box, boxes ;

(iii) Most Nouns ending in *-o* also form the plural by adding *-es* to the singular ; as,

buffalo, buffaloes ;	mango, mangoes ;	hero, heroes ;
potato, potatoes ;	cargo, cargoes ;	echo, echoes ;
negro, negroes ;	volcano, volcanoes ;	

(iv) A few nouns ending in *-o* merely add *-s*, ; as,

dynamo, dynamos ;	solo, solos ;	ratio, ratios ;
canto, cantos ;	memento, mementos ;	quarto, quartos ;
piano, pianos ;	photo, photos ;	stereo, stereos ;
kilo, kilos ;	logo, logos ;	commando, commandos

(v) Nouns ending in *-y*, preceded by a *consonant*, form their plural by changing *-y* into *i* and adding *-es* ; as,

baby, babies ;	lady, ladies ;	city, cities ;
army, armies ;	story, stories ;	pony, ponies ;

(vi) The following nouns ending in *-f* or *-fe* form their plural by changing *-f* or *-fe* into *v* and adding *-es* ; as,

thief, thieves ;	wife, wives ;	wolf, wolves ;
life, lives ;	calf, calves ;	leaf, leaves ;
loaf, loaves ;	knife, knives ;	shelf, shelves ;
half, halves ;	elf, elves ;	self, selves ;
sheaf, sheaves		

The nouns *dwarf*, *hoof*, *scarf* and *wharf* take either *-s* or *-ves* in the plural.

dwarfs or dwarves ;	hoofs or hooves ;	scarfs or scarves ;
wharfs or wharves		

Other words ending in *-f* or *-fe* add *-s*; as,

chief, chiefs ;	safe, safes ;	proof, proofs
gulf, gulfs ;	cliff, cliffs ;	handkerchief, handkerchiefs

32. A few nouns form their plural *by changing the inside vowel of the singular* ; as,

man, men ;	woman, women ;	foot, feet ;	tooth, teeth ;
goose, geese ;	mouse, mice ;	louse, lice.	

33. There are a few nouns that form their plural *by adding -en* to the singular ; as,
ox, oxen; child, children.

The plural of *fish* is *fish* or *fishes*. In current English *fish* is the usual plural. *Fishes* is sometimes used to talk about different kinds of fish.

34. Some nouns have the singular and the plural *alike* ; as,

Swine, sheep, deer ; cod, trout, salmon; aircraft, spacecraft, series, species.

Pair, dozen, score, gross, hundred, thousand (when used after numerals).

I bought three *dozen* oranges.

Some people reach the age of three *score* and ten.

The sari cost me five *thousand* rupees.

Stone, hundredweight.

He weighs above nine *stone*.

Twenty *hundredweight* make one ton.

35. Some nouns are used only in the plural.

(1) Names of instruments which have two parts forming a kind of pair; as,

Bellows, scissors, tongs, pincers, spectacles.

(2) Names of certain articles of dress ; as,

Trousers, drawers, breeches, jeans, tights, shorts, pyjamas.

(3) Certain other nouns ; as,

Annals, thanks, proceeds (of a sale), tidings, environs, nuptials, obsequies, assets, chattels.

36. Some nouns originally singular are now generally used in the plural ; as,

Alms, riches, eaves.

Riches do many things.

37. The following nouns look plural but are in fact singular :

(1) Names of subjects

mathematics, physics, electronics, etc.

(2) The word *news*

(3) Names of some common diseases

measles, mumps, rickets

(4) Names of some games

billiards, draughts

Mathematics *is* his favourite study.

No news *is* good news.

India won by *an* innings and three runs.

Measles *is* infectious.

Billiards *is* my favourite game.

'Means' is used either as singular or plural. But when it has the meaning of 'wealth' it is always plural ; as,

He succeeded by *this* means (or, by *these* means) in passing the examination.

His means are small, but he has incurred no debt.

38. Certain Collective Nouns, though singular in form, are always used as plurals ;

Polity, caste, woman, people, gentry.

These *poultry* are mine.
 Whose are those *cattle* ?
Vermin destroy our property and carry disease.
 Who are those *people* (= persons) ?
 There are few *gentry* in this town.

Note — As a Common Noun 'people' means a 'nation' and is used in both singular and plural ; as,

The Japanese are a hard-working *people*
 There are many different *peoples* in Europe.

39. A Compound Noun generally forms its plural *by adding -s to the principal word* ; as,

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
Commander-in-chief	commanders-in-chief
Coat-of-mail	coats-of-mail
Son-in-law	sons-in-law
Daughter-in-law	daughters-in-law
Stepson	stepsons
Stepdaughter	stepdaughters
Maid-servant	maid-servants (but <i>manservant</i> , plural <i>menservants</i>)
Passer-by	passers-by
Looker-on	lookers-on
Man-of-war	men-of-war

We say *spoonfuls* and *handfuls*, because *spoonful* and *handful* are regarded as one word.

Note that the Proper Nouns *Brahman* and *Mussulman* are not compounds of *man*, therefore their plurals are *Brahmans* and *Mussulmans*.

40. Many nouns taken from foreign languages keep their original plural form ; as,

From Latin—

Erratum, errata ;	formula, formulae (or formulas) ;
index, indices ;	memorandum, memoranda ;
radius, radii ;	terminus, termini (or terminuses).

From Greek—

Axis, axes ;	parenthesis, parentheses ;
crisis, crises ;	hypothesis, hypotheses
basis, bases ;	phenomenon, phenomena ;
analysis, analyses ;	criterion, criteria

From Italian—

Bandit, banditti, (or bandits)

From French—

Madame (madam), mesdames; monsieur, messieurs.

From Hebrew—

Cherub, cherubim (or cherubs); seraph, seraphim (or seraphs)

41. Some nouns have two forms for the plural, each with a somewhat different meaning.

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
Brother	brothers, sons of the same parent. brethren, members of a society or a community.

Write the plural forms of the following nouns.

(a) dairy _____ (b) child _____

(c) mango _____ (d) thorn _____

(e) watch _____ (f) veto _____

(g) cargo _____ (h) fish _____

(i) jeans _____ (j) sky _____

(k) formula _____ (l) lie _____

(m) vortex _____ (n) volcano _____
vortexes volcanoes

Tick (✓) the correct form of the noun in each sentence.

- (a) I have three (child/children).
- (b) One (woman/women) sat by my side.
- (c) (Baby/Babies) play with bottles as toys.
- (d) I put two big (potato/potatoes) in the lunch box.
- (e) A few men wear (watch/watches).
- (f) I put a (book/books) on the desk.
- (g) I saw some (mouse/mice) running about.
- (h) There are few (bus/buses) on the road today.

In the following sentences change the words in italics to plural.

(a) The *girl* brought a *glass* in a tray.

(b) My *horse* preferred to wear an English *saddle*.

(c) My *cat* loved to jump in and out of the *basket*.

(d) A *man* should grow a *tree* to breathe good air.

(e) I love to wear *jeans*. _____

(f) I like *fish* and *rice*. _____