

17 Plurals

1. FORMING MOST PLURALS

In order to show the plural of most words:

- Add *s* (book, books; street, streets) or
- Add *es* if the word ends in *s*, *ss*, *sh*, or *ch*. The *es* makes it easier to pronounce certain words more easily (dress, dresses; crash, crashes; crutch, crutches).

Remember: Do not use apostrophes to form most plurals: *the Smiths* (not *the Smith's*). See Card 3, second **Hint**.

EXERCISES

In the spaces provided, write the plural forms of these words.

1. blast _____
2. bus _____
3. bash _____
4. brass _____
5. branch _____
6. bug _____
7. blush _____
8. bunch _____

2. THE -Y ENDING

Many words do not follow the regular *s* or *es* pattern; therefore you need to learn other ways plurals are formed in the language.

- The plural of a word ending in *y*, changes to *ies* if the *y* follows a consonant, thus: sky, skies; comedy, comedies. (The letter before *y* in each word is a consonant. Drop *y*; add *ies*.)
- If the *y* follows a vowel, usually only an *s* is added: joy, joys; day, days. (The letter before *y* in each word is a vowel. Add only *s* for plural.)

Reminder: *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*—and sometimes *y*—are vowels. All other letters are consonants.

Hint: When in doubt about a word ending in *y*, consult your dictionary. If no plural is given, follow the rules set forth here.

EXERCISES

In the spaces provided, write the plural forms of these words.

1. turkey _____
2. tally _____
3. try _____
4. toy _____
5. tarry _____

6. money _____
7. mercy _____
8. mystery _____

3. THE -F ENDING

- Words ending in *f* or *fe* may add an *s*; or, the *f* may change to *v* and take an *es* in the plural. There is no rule to remember. They must be learned individually: calf, calves; knife, knives; self, selves; roof, roofs; belief, beliefs; life, lives.
- The dictionary is the best place to check any *-f* ending words which trouble you in the plural.

EXERCISES

Complete the following assignments on separate paper.

1. Write a sentence about a burglary. In it use the plurals of *thief* and *safe*.
2. Write a sentence about a marching band. In it use the plural of *fife*.
3. Use the plural of the word *hoof* in a sentence about the reindeer Rudolph.
4. Use the plural of *wife* in a sentence about someone who has been married twice.
5. Use the plural of *elf* in a sentence about the spirit of Christmas.
6. Use the plural of *loaf* in a sentence about grocery shopping.

4. THE -O ENDING

- Words ending in *o* usually add *s* if the *o* follows a vowel: radio, radios.
- If the *o* follows a consonant, add *es*: potato, potatoes; hero, heroes.
- Words borrowed from the Italian—and usually referring to musical terms—add an *s* even if the *o* is preceded by a consonant: soprano, sopranos; solo, solos.
- There are a few exceptions to these rules and they must be learned individually: auto, autos; echo, echoes; tobacco, tobaccos; dynamo, dynamos.

EXERCISES

Complete the following on separate paper.

1. Write a sentence describing a meal. In your sentence, use the plural of *tomato*.
2. Use the plural of *no* in a sentence about votes cast in the last election.
3. Use the plural of *echo* in a sentence about a mountain peak.
4. Use the plural of *alto* in a sentence about a singing group.
5. Use the plural of *burro* in a sentence about a trail in the Grand Canyon.

Plurals

5. OTHER PLURALS

- Many words have the same form for singular and plural: deer, sheep, bass, wheat. Some words are used in a plural sense only: cattle, people, series.
- Foreign words, now part of the English language, form plurals in ways that are different from our system of plurals. You will have to learn these individually.
- *-us* ending words usually change to *i*: alumnus, alumni; focus, foci; fungus, fungi. *Exception*: bonus, bonuses.
- *-um* and *-on* words usually change to *a*: medium, media; curriculum, curricula (curriculum is also used); criterion, criteria.
- *-is* ending words usually change to *es*: crisis, crises; analysis, analyses.
- *-a* ending words which indicate that the word is feminine change to *ae* in the plural: alumna (*female graduate*), alumnae (*several female graduates*).

EXERCISES

Provide the plural forms of these words.

1. locus _____
2. trout _____
3. parenthesis _____
4. alga _____

5. phenomenon _____
6. alumna _____
7. datum _____
8. moose _____

6. MORE PLURALS

- Some words ignore all the rules and change their form completely in the plural: man, men; woman, women; goose, geese; ox, oxen; tooth, teeth; child, children.
- Some words are made by combining two or more words, and these form plurals by adding *s* to the basic word: sister-in-law, sisters-in-law; commander-in-chief, commanders-in-chief.
- When words end in *ful*, add *s* to the end of the word: mouthful, mouthfuls; cupful, cupfuls.

EXERCISES

Write the plurals of these words.

1. editor-in-chief _____
2. foot _____
3. teaspoonful _____
4. brother-in-law _____
5. mouse _____