

Plural nouns: Irregular endings

Introduction



There were lots of **people** at the event, including **men**, **women** & **children**.

Definition and use

We usually add **s** or **es** to a singular noun to form the plural but there are also irregular forms of plural nouns in English.

Construction and examples

Most depend on the ending of the singular noun but there are exceptions and some involve other spelling changes. Here are some examples of the most common:

	Singular	Plural	Comments
f/fe	shelf	shelves	This includes most words ending in 'lf' but an exception is 'gulfs'.
	half	halves	
	leaf	leaves	
	life	lives	
	knife	knives	
			Words ending in 'ff' take 's' e.g. 'cliffs'.
			Some words ending in a single 'f' take 's', e.g. 'chiefs', whilst others can take either form, e.g. 'scarfs'/'scarves'.

oo	tooth goose foot	teeth geese feet	This only applies to a minority of words. Most with 'oo' are regular, e.g. boots, spoons, books.
Sometimes, there is no change.	sheep deer fish means series species aircraft	sheep deer fish/fishes* means series species aircraft	<p>There are lots of other examples including more animals and types of fish, e.g. salmon and cod.</p> <p>It is correct to use 'fish' for more than one of the same species and 'fishes' for more than one of different species. 'Fish' is also an uncountable noun when referring to food.</p>

See also [subject/verb agreement](#) and [compound nouns](#).



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