

appendix 6 noun plurals: special cases

common irregular plurals Some nouns ending in *-f(e)* have plurals in *-ves*.

calf/calves, elf/elves, half/halves, hoof/hooves, knife/knives, leaf/leaves, life/lives, loaf/loaves, scarf/scarves, self/selves, shelf/shelves, thief/thieves, wife/wives

Other irregular plurals:

child/children, man/men, woman/women, person/people (less often persons), penny/pence, tooth/teeth, goose/geese, foot/feet, mouse/mice, louse/lice, ox/oxen, quiz/quizzes

singular and plural the same The following nouns do not change in the plural:

sheep, deer, fish (usually), aircraft, offspring and the names of many animals, birds and fish that are hunted or caught for food or sport (e.g. *elk, pheasant, salmon*).

Nouns that have both singular and plural in *-s*:

barracks, crossroads, headquarters, means, series, species, works (= 'factory')

nouns ending in -o Some nouns ending in *-o* form their plurals in *-s*, and some in *-es*:

plural in -s: *commandos, concertos, Eskimos, kilos, logos, photos, pianos, scenarios, solos, sopranos*

plural in -es: *echoes, heroes, potatoes, tomatoes*

plural usually in -es: *mosquitoes, tornadoes, volcanoes*

singular uncountable nouns ending in -s The following nouns have no plurals:

news, billiards, draughts, measles

Most singular nouns ending in *-ics* are also uncountable and have no plurals:

mathematics, physics, athletics

But *politics* and *statistics* can also have plural uses:

What are your politics? The economic statistics are terrible.

after a number *Hundred, thousand, million* etc have plurals without *-s* after numbers (see page 311).

two hundred years five thousand metres twenty-five billion dollars

divided objects The following plural nouns have no singular:

glasses, jeans, pants, pyjamas, scissors, shorts, spectacles (= 'glasses'), tights, trousers

To talk about one example we say *a pair of (jeans etc)*. (NOT *a jean*)

other plurals with no singular Some other plural nouns usually have no singular:

belongings, cattle, clothes, congratulations, contents, customs (at a frontier), earnings, funds, goods, groceries, manners (= 'social behaviour'), Middle Ages, oats, odds, outskirts, police, premises, regards, remains, riches, savings, scales (for weighing), staff, stairs, surroundings, thanks, troops.

The following expressions are also plural only:

the British, the English, the Irish, the Welsh, the Dutch, the French, the Spanish

foreign plurals still used The following foreign imports still have their original plurals:

-is/-es: *analysis/analyses, axis/axes, basis/bases, crisis/crises, diagnosis/diagnoses, ellipsis/ellipses, emphasis/emphases, hypothesis/hypotheses, neurosis/neuroses, oasis/oases, parenthesis/parentheses, synthesis/syntheses, synopsis/synopses, thesis/theses*

others: *antenna/antennae, appendix/appendices, bacterium/bacteria, cactus/cacti (or cactuses), corpus/corpora, criterion/criteria, curriculum/curricula, formula/formulae (or formulas), fungus/fungi, nebula/nebulae, nucleus/nuclei, phenomenon/phenomena, schema/schemata, stratum/strata, syllabus/syllabi (more often syllabuses), radius/radii, stimulus/stimuli, vertebra/vertebrae*

The plurals *data* and *media* are now often used with singular verbs.

The data are/is difficult to interpret. The media are/is too powerful.

plurals with apostrophes Apostrophes are used in the plurals of letters of the alphabet, and sometimes in the plurals of abbreviations and dates.

She spelt 'necessary' with two c's. PC's are getting cheaper. (More usual: *PCs*)

Do you remember the 1960's, Granddad? (More usual: *1960s*)

Apostrophes are not correct in other plurals.

I need some new jeans. (NOT ... *jean's*)

compound nouns Note the following:

passers-by, mothers-in-law (or mother-in-laws), runners-up