

Plurals

Functional Skills English Entry 3 - Handout

What are singular and plural nouns?

A singular noun means one. A plural noun means more than one. Most nouns change their spelling to show there is more than one, but some stay the same and some change completely.

Main plural rules

Rule	Examples	Remember
1. Most nouns: add -s	book → books car → cars day → days	Usually the easiest rule.
2. Endings -s, -ss, -sh, -ch, -x, -z: add -es	bus → buses box → boxes watch → watches quiz → quizzes	Listen for the extra syllable in many of these words.
3. Consonant + y: change y to i and add -es	city → cities baby → babies party → parties	Consonant + y → -ies.
4. Vowel + y: just add -s	boy → boys key → keys day → days	Vowels are a, e, i, o, u.
5. Some -f / -fe words: change to -ves	leaf → leaves knife → knives shelf → shelves	Not every word follows this rule: roof → roofs.
6. Some words stay the same	sheep → sheep deer → deer fish → fish	The singular and plural spellings can be identical.
7. Irregular plurals: learn them	child → children man → men woman → women mouse → mice person → people	These words change completely, so memorise the common forms.

Exam tip: Read the whole word before choosing a rule. Check the ending carefully, then write the plural and read it again.

Quick exam check

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
box	boxes	city	cities
key	keys	child	children

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
sheep	sheep	mouse	mice
knife	knives	man	men

Mini recap: Most plurals add -s or -es. Watch the ending of the word, and remember that some plurals stay the same or are irregular.