

Making plurals

Author's notes

This resource is aimed at Level 1 Literacy (and ESOL) classes but can also be used at Entry 3 / Level 2 and works well in mixed ability classes.

Learning objectives

- Use existing knowledge and experience to work out spelling rules.
- Recognise that rules do not always apply and that some spellings must be individually learned.
- Use rules or patterns to spell plurals correctly.

Teaching ideas

- Do not teach all these plurals at once! (See differentiation ideas below).
- Talking through the pictures and working out what they are is part of the fun! Not all are obvious (e.g. branches – set 1, hero – set 3, cuffs – set 4) especially to ESOL students. If you have a data projector / smartboard use it to display the worksheet during the discussion.
- Sheets can be used for consolidation or homework. However, they probably work best with no initial input (apart from discussing the pictures and the meaning of the word 'plural'). This allows learners to investigate and discover any rules or patterns for themselves.
- For a multi-sensory activity print pages 2-7, cut off titles and lower part of each page leaving just the pictures. Laminate (arranging 3 sets of pictures per A4 laminating sheet) and cut into cards. Give a selection of cards (covering just one spelling rule) to students and ask them to write the plurals. Cards can also be given out to small groups and students challenged to create 'funny' sentences using as many plurals as possible. E.g. *'There were so many peaches on the branches of the tree that the foxes loaded them into cardboard boxes and gave them away to local churches!'* Award prizes or points for the best sentences.

Differentiation

- For students with dyslexia (and Entry students) work on one rule at a time. You may want to split some 'rules' to cover 2 separate sessions (e.g. Plurals - 5 can be split into vowel-y words in week 1, consonant-y words a few weeks later. (Use laminated cards rather than printed worksheets).
Note: for further work on this topic see Janet Kinsey's *'Adding an s to words that end in y'* resource (available on site in the E3 and L1 spelling sections).

Extension

- As a revision activity or summative assessment activity use a selection of cards from different categories. Challenge students to say and write the plurals.
- Use Worksheet 6 to promote discussion about grammar and plural subjects taking plural verbs. How we say "A pair of..." and why we say 'My jeans were very expensive' – not '...was very...'.
• Spread cards (from one or more categories) face down on table. First student turns a card over and writes correct plural on small white board / paper. If correct they keep the card. If incorrect he or she replaces the card. Move on to next student. Winner is the person with the most cards.
- Investigate further unusual / foreign plurals (e.g. gateaux, data, criteria, crises, octopi, cacti, panini, fungi, cherubim) or words with no singular form (e.g. billiards, blues (music), mathematics, measles).

Main curriculum references

Actual references covered will depend on the learner group and level, and how the resource is used by the teacher.

Literacy

Ww/L1.1 Spell correctly words used most often in work, studies and daily life. Know and apply (a) a range of methods (visual, phonetic, kinaesthetic, analogies, mnemonics) to help learn and remember correct spellings (b) some spelling rules to help attempt and check spellings. Understand spelling patterns in plurals, using rules such as:

- when **y** is preceded by a consonant, change **y** to **i** and add **-es**, e.g. *lady/ladies*
- when **y** is preceded by a vowel, add **-s**, e.g. *key/keys*
- add **-es** to most words ending in **-s**, **-sh**, **-ch**, e.g. *church/churches*
- change **-f** to **-ves**, e.g. *thief/thieves*.

ESOL

Ww/L1.1 spell correctly words used most often in work, studies and daily life

a) apply knowledge about words to aid accurate spelling b) use strategies to aid accurate spelling

References and further information

- Wikimedia Foundation Inc (2008), *Wikipedia: English plural*, Viewed 24 March 2008, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_plural
- Kevin Owens (2006), *Phonics on the Web: Plural nouns*, Viewed 24 March 2008, <http://www.phonicsontheweb.com/plurals.php>
- Writers on the Net (2005), *Irregular plurals*, Viewed 24 March 2008, http://www.writers.com/tips_spelling.html

Plurals - 1



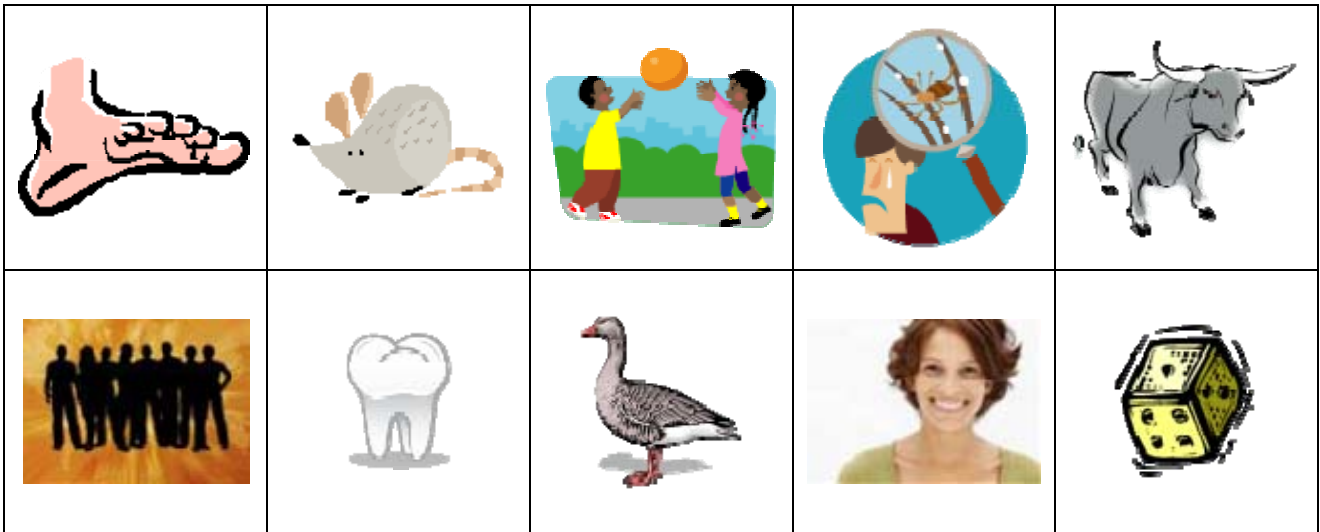
Write the singular and plural form of each noun.

singular	plural	singular	plural

Write two sentences. Use as many plural nouns as you can.

Is there a rule or a pattern that you can explain?

Plurals – 2



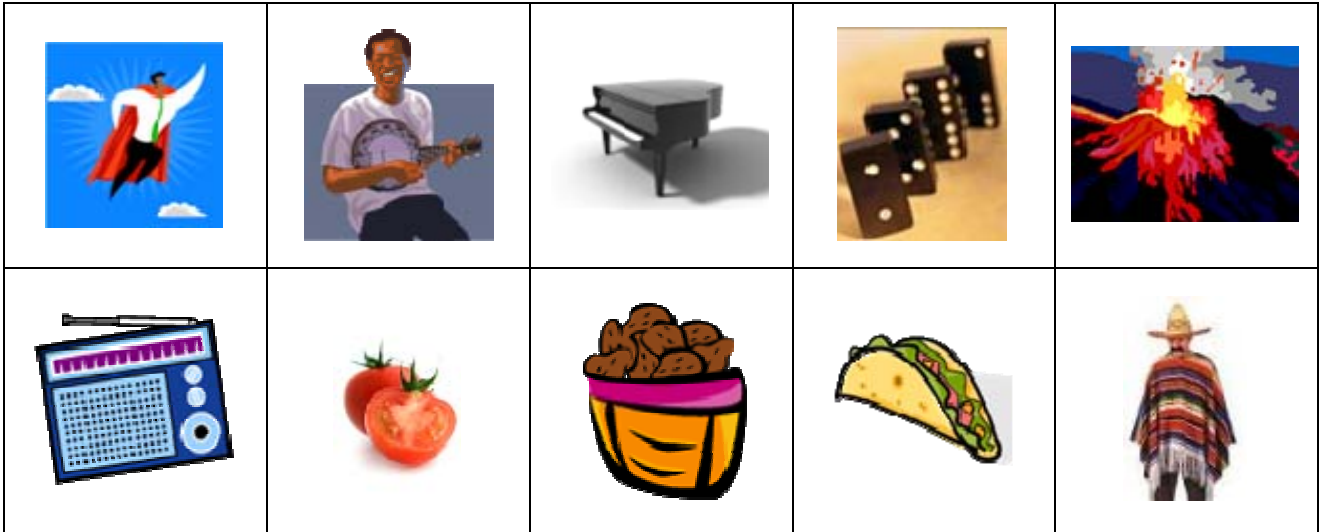
Write the singular and plural form of each noun.

singular	plural	singular	plural

Write two sentences. Use as many plural nouns as you can.

Is there a rule or a pattern that you can explain?

Plurals – 3



Write the singular and plural form of each noun.

singular	plural	singular	plural

Write two sentences. Use as many plural nouns as you can.

Is there a rule or a pattern that you can explain?

Plurals – 4



Write the singular and plural form of each noun.

singular	plural	singular	plural

Write two sentences. Use as many plural nouns as you can.

Is there a rule or a pattern that you can explain?

Plurals – 5



Write the singular and plural form of each noun.

singular	plural	singular	plural

Write two sentences. Use as many plural nouns as you can.

Is there a rule or a pattern that you can explain?

Plurals – 6



Write the singular and plural form of each noun.

singular	plural	singular	plural

Write two sentences. Use as many plural nouns as you can.

Is there a rule or a pattern that you can explain?

Answers and rules / patterns (where they exist!).

Plurals are listed in logical groups, not necessarily in the order that they appear on each page.

1 'es' plurals

Rule: use -es after hissing sounds s, x, z, ch, sh.

- peaches
- branches
- churches
- matches
- watches
- brushes
- dishes
- buses
- boxes
- foxes

Words (not illustrated) ending in z include buzz - buzzes, quiz - quizzes.

2 Irregular plurals (many are Old English)

Many involve vowel changes but there is no set rule, you just have to learn them!

- child - children (*also brothers - brethren*).
- ox - oxen
- woman - women (*also point out man - men*).
- die - dice (*but dice now also accepted as the singular and plural form*).
- louse - lice
- mouse - mice (*mouses can be used as the plural of a computer mouse*)
- goose - geese
- foot - feet
- tooth - teeth
- person - people

3 Plurals of words ending in 'o'

Rule: the most common ending is 's' especially for music-related words (e.g. *sopranos, solos, cellos*), modern words (e.g. *silos, autos*) and words with another vowel preceding the 'o' (e.g. *radios, stereos, cuckoos*). Older words such as *domino, potato, tomato, hero* and *echo* take -es. Some words can have either ending e.g. *halos / haloes, mangoes / mangos*.

- banjo -banjos
- piano - pianos
- radio- radios
- poncho - ponchos
- taco - tacos
- tomato - tomatoes
- domino - dominoes
- volcano - volcanoes
- hero - heroes
- potato - potatoes

4 Plurals of words ending in 'f' or 'fe'

Rule: change the 'f' or 'fe' to a 'v' and then add 'es'. However there are many exceptions where the plural is created by simply adding an 's' and some words have two acceptable plurals (e.g. *hoofs / hooves, wharf / wharves*).

- leaf - leaves
- half - halves
- loaf - loaves
- shelf - shelves
- knife - knives (but *safe / safes*)
- cuff - cuffs
- roof - roofs
- cliff - cliffs
- sheriff - sheriffs
- scarf - scarfs *or* scarves

5 Plurals of words ending in 'y'

Rule: if there is a vowel before the 'y' add an 's'. If there is a consonant before the 'y' change the 'y' to an 'i' and add 'es'. *This rule really works as there are no common exceptions!*

- baby - babies
- battery - batteries
- fly - flies
- lorry - lorries
- spy - spies
- chimney - chimneys
- jockey - jockeys
- tray - trays
- trolley - trolleys
- turkey - turkeys

6 Words with identical singular and plural forms (or no singular form).

No rules! Although it is interesting to point out that 5-10 below all involve 'two legs' or two parts and are referred to as "A pair of ...".

(other examples include pants, overalls, shorts, tights, leggings, pliers, goggles, tongs, forceps).

- fish (fish or fishes)
- deer
- sheep
- luggage (or baggage)
- trousers (or jeans)
- pyjamas
- binoculars
- glasses (or spectacles)
- scissors
- tweezers