

## Simple irregular and regular plurals presentation

On each line below, only one of the nouns has a regular plural (+s/ +es/ -ies) and the other is irregular. Change the one regular one to the plural and also change the irregular one if you can. You can skip the irregular plural if you aren't sure, but please always change one on each line to the regular plural before you move onto the next line.

### Elementary

boy	man
girl	woman
human	person
child	kid
foot	hand
postman	teacher
air hostess	policewoman
pupil	schoolchild

### Pre-Intermediate

homemaker	housewife
tongue	tooth
mouse	rat
knife	roof
dolphin	goldfish

### Intermediate

criminal	thief
loaf	bread roll
branch	leaf
death	life
deer	horse

### Upper Intermediate

century	millennium
serial	series
material	medium
crisis	panic
individual	yourself
alumnus	fellow graduate
axis	line
half	quarter
goat	sheep
duck	goose
fox	wolf
pony	reindeer
factory	steelworks
means	way

**Advanced**

innings	run
analysis	calculation
event	phenomenon
dissertation	thesis
bacterium	virus
hypothesis	theory
summary	synopsis
combination	synthesis
boost	stimulus
organism	species
basis	foundation
flea	louse
spacecraft	spaceship
tuna	whale
calf	piglet
lake	oasis
brown bear	wild boar
salmon	sardine
clam	squid
tadpole	trout
criterion	checklist
diagnosis	treatment
biceps	muscle
pheasant	quail
bison	cow
moose	polar bear
faux pas	slipup
caterpillar	larva
nervous tick	neurosis
electron	nucleus
cure	prognosis
sheaf	sheet
layer	stratum
conference	symposium
spine	vertebra
executive summary	précis
assignation	rendezvous
intersection	locus
battalion	corps
metamorphosis	transformation
cow	ox
elf	pixie
dwarf	troll
pig	swine
hoof	proof
carp	crab

eel	koi
futon	samurai
geek	otaku
mussel	starfish
automaton	robot
edit	erratum

*Try to make generalisations about what kinds of words are irregular above, then use patterns those to fill in some of the other irregular plurals.*

*Use the hints below to add and check more irregular plurals above.*

- a final “-f” often changes to “-ves”
- final “-um” in Latin words often changes to “-a”
- final “-is” sometimes changes to “-es”
- final “-us” in Latin words often changes to “-i”
- final “-on” in Latin words sometimes changes to “-a”
- final “-a” in singular Latin words sometimes changes to “-ae”
- animals and fish are often the same in the singular and plural (but shellfish tend to have regular plurals)
- some animals and other words such as some body parts change the vowel in the middle of the word
- some old (and often outdated) words have very irregular plural forms like “-en”
- foreign words which still seem foreign tend to be the same in the singular and plural, especially if they only refer to foreign things
- some singular words ending in “-s” don’t change in the plural (although the pronunciation sometimes changes)
- final “-s” in French words usually doesn’t change when changing to the plural, but English speakers sometimes pronounce the “-s” only when it is a plural

*Check as a class or with the answer key, then test each other in pairs:*

- Read out a pair above and see if your partner can say the regular plural back
- Read out a pair above and see if your partner can say which one is irregular
- Read out a word which makes an irregular plural and see if your partner can say the plural
- Read out a pair above and see if your partner can make both plurals



## Suggested answers

### Elementary

boys	men
girls	women
humans	people
children	kids
feet	hands
postmen	teachers
air hostesses	policewomen
pupils	schoolchildren

### Pre-Intermediate

homemakers	housewives
tongues	teeth
mice	rats
knives	roofs
dolphins	goldfish

### Intermediate

criminals	thieves
loaves	bead rolls
branches	leaves
deaths	lives
deer	horses

### Upper Intermediate

centuries	millennia
serials	series
materials	media
crises	panics
individuals	yourselves
alumni	fellow graduates
axes	lines
halves	quarters
goats	sheep
ducks	geese
foxes	wolves
ponies	reindeer
factories	steelworks
means	ways

### Advanced

innings	runs
analyses	calculations
events	phenomena
dissertations	theses
bacteria	viruses

hypotheses	theories
summaries	synopses
combinations	syntheses
boosts	stimuli
organisms	species
bases	foundations
fleas	lice
spacecraft	spaceships
tuna	whales
calves	piglets
lakes	oases
brown bears	wild boar
salmon	sardines
clams	squid
tadpoles	trout
criteria	checklists
diagnoses	treatments
biceps	muscles
pheasants	quail
bison	cows
moose	polar bears
faux pas	slipups
caterpillars	larvae
nervous ticks	neuroses
electrons	nuclei
cures	prognoses
sheaves	sheets
layers	strata
conferences	symposia
spines	vertebrae
executive summaries	précis
assignments	rendezvous
intersections	loci
battalions	corps
metamorphoses	transformations
cows	oxen
elves	pixies
dwarves	trolls
pigs	swine
hooves	proofs
carp	crabs
eels	koi
futons	samurai
geeks	otaku
mussels	starfish
automata	robot
edits	errata