Forming Plurals

Note: This document should only be used as a reference and should not replace assignment guidelines.

Plurals let readers know if words refer to a single object or many objects.

General Rules
Adding -*s*
Most words are made plural simply by adding -*s* to the end of the word.

EXAMPLES: girl ⟶ girl**s**

apple ⟶ apple**s**

Words Ending in -*sh*, -*s*, -*ch*, -*x*, or -*z*
When a word ends in -*ch*, -*s*, -*sh*, -*x*, or -*z*, its plural is formed by adding -*es* to the word.

EXAMPLES: iris ⟶ iris**es**

ash ⟶ ash**es**

Plurals Formed by Internal Changes
Some words do not use -*s* or -*es* to form plurals. They change into new words as plurals.

EXAMPLES: child ⟶ child**ren**

man ⟶ m**e**n

person ⟶ p**eople**

Plurals that Retain their Singular Form
Some plurals retain their singular form. Such nouns are spelled the same whether they are being used in a singular or plural sense. Often, they are names of animals or grains.

EXAMPLES: corn ⟶ corn

fish ⟶ fish

Compound Words
Plurals of compound words use an -s or -es at the end of the entire compound word.

Examples: checkbook ⟶ checkbooks

warm-up ⟶ warm-ups

However, when the main word in the compound word is the first word, add the -*s* or -*es* to the first word.

EXAMPLES: mile-per-hour ⟶ mile**s** per hour

sister-in-law ⟶ sister**s**-in-law

Words Ending in –o
Adding -*s*
Most words ending in -*o* are made plural with the addition of -*s*.

EXAMPLES: zoo ⟶ zoo**s**

radio ⟶ radio**s**

adding -*es*
A few words ending in -*o* are made plural with the addition of -*es*. These words have a consonant before the final -*o*.

EXAMPLES: tomato ⟶ tomato**es**

hero ⟶ hero**es**

Forming Plurals

Note: This document should only be used as a reference and should not replace assignment guidelines.

Adding Either *-s* or *-es*

A few words ending in an *-o* that is preceded by a consonant may be made plural by adding either *-s* or *-es*. Always be consistent in the form you use.

EXAMPLES: tornado ➔ tornado**s**
                      tornado ➔ tornado**es**

                      zero ➔ zero**s**
                      zero ➔ zero**es**

Words Ending in –f or –fe

Adding *-s* or *-es*

Words ending in *-f* or *-fe* become plural with the addition of *-s* or *-es*. Generally, when forming these plurals, the *-f* is changed to a *-v* before adding the *-s* or *-es*.

EXAMPLES: leaf ➔ lea**ves**
                      wife ➔ wi**ves**

Exceptions to this rule appear often. In these cases, the *-f* is not replaced with a *-v* when the plural ending is added. Generally, these exceptions exist to avoid confusion. For example, the exceptions below prevent confusion with the singular verbs *believes* and *saves* and with the plural noun *motives*.

EXAMPLES: belief ➔ belief**s**
                      safe ➔ safe**s**
                      motif ➔ motif**s**

Latin Words Ending in –um

Adding *-a*

For some Latin words ending in *-um*, the plural is formed by changing the *-um* to *-a*. However, not all words ending in *-um* follow this rule. When in doubt, check a dictionary.

EXAMPLES: curriculum ➔ curricul**a**

Latin Words Ending in -us

Adding *-i*

Latin words ending in *-us* are made plural by changing the *-us* to *-i*. Again, not all words ending in *-us* follow this pattern.

EXAMPLES: syllabus ➔ syllab**i**
                      cactus ➔ cact**i**