

5. Singular and Plural Nouns

Count Nouns: Most nouns name something you can count; for example, if you buy a bag of peanuts, you can count each peanut in the *bag*—*one peanut, two peanuts, three peanuts*, and so on. We call nouns like *peanut* count nouns, and usually we add an *-s* ending to show more than one.

Singular count nouns refer to one person or thing while plural count nouns refer to more than one person or thing. We have several ways of making count nouns plural.

Proofreading for Plural *-s* Ending Errors:

1. Read your work out loud, reading exactly what you have written on the paper very carefully. Often you'll hear an *-s* ending that shouldn't be there, or recognize that an *-s* ending is missing.
2. Look at the count nouns in your sentences. Ask yourself if you are referring to one person or thing, or more than one person or thing.
3. Check to make sure that you have not added *-s* endings to non-count nouns. Refer to the list of non-count nouns in this unit.
4. Look at each noun preceded by *one, another, each, every, either,* and *neither*. Make sure that the noun does not have an *-s* ending.
5. Look at each noun preceded by *one of, every one of, each of, either of* and *neither of*. Make sure that the noun has an *-s* ending.

Some Rules for Forming Plurals:

- 1) To make a count noun plural, you can often just add an *-s* ending:

book	books	horse	horses
movie	movies	student	students

- 2) Most count nouns ending in *o, s, sh, ch,* and *x* add *-es* to form plurals:

potato	potato <u>es</u>	church	church <u>es</u>
class	class <u>es</u>	dish	dish <u>es</u>
box	box <u>es</u>		

- 3) Many count nouns ending in a consonant followed by *y* change the *y* to *i* and add *-es* to form plurals:

company	compani <u>es</u>	library	librari <u>es</u>
baby	bab <i>ies</i>	family	famili <u>es</u>

4) Still other count nouns change form rather than just the ending:

man men woman women

child children wife wives

To be sure that you are using the correct plural form, consult this list or a dictionary.

Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences, making any underlined singular nouns plural. Notice that modifiers like many, most, and two, signal the plural form of count nouns.

Example: The student studied for the history midterm.

 Many students studied for the history midterm.

1. I watched a film while I was sick.

 I watched several _____ while I was sick.

2. The library has a collection of rare books.

 Most _____ have _____ of rare books.

3. The photographer took shots of a wolf traveling in a pack.

 A team of _____ took shots of _____ traveling in _____.

4. The woman ran a daycare center.

 The three _____ ran a daycare center together.

5. I wrote an essay for my history class.

 I wrote many _____ for my history class.

6. Maria ate a stuffed tomato for dinner.

 Maria ate two stuffed _____ for dinner.

Notice that the articles a and an and *the are* all used before singular nouns—a society, a wolf, an essay, *the woman*. But only the article *the* can be used before plural nouns.

The article a is used before words beginning with a consonant sound:

 a dog a university a car a house

The article an is used before words beginning with a vowel sound:

 an octopus an old man an umbrella an awful movie

Non-Count Nouns: Some nouns name things you cannot count, things you can only measure. For example, if you buy a pound of peanut butter, you can't count the peanut butter; you can only measure it in weight or quantity, like ounces or cups. We call words like *peanut butter* **non-count nouns** and we do not add *-s* endings to the noun, no matter how much of it we are referring to. As subjects of verbs, non-count nouns are just like singular nouns, so in the present tense, their verbs have *-s* endings.

The following is a list of commonly-used nouns which are almost always non-count:

admiration	foolishness	luck	propaganda
advice	fun	luggage	psychiatry
air	furniture	machinery	psychology
architecture	fusion	mail	rain
assistance	garbage	math	recreation
baggage	generosity	mathematics	relaxation
blame	gravity	merchandise	reliability
boredom	happiness	momentum	research
bravery	hardware	money	rice
bread	health	music	sadness
butter	heat	news	safety
chemistry	help	nonsense	salt
cheese	homework	objectivity	scenery
clothing	honesty	oxygen	shopping
comprehension	housework	participation	significance
conservation	housing	patience	slang
correspondence	ignorance	pay	sleet
courage	immigration	peace	snow
darkness	information	permission	software
economics	integration	physics	status
electricity	intelligence	poetry	superiority
enjoyment	irritability	pollution	survival
entertainment	isolation	postage	traffic
estimation	jargon	poverty	transportation
equipment	junk	precipitation	violence
ethics	knowledge	precision	wealth
evidence	laughter	prestige	weather
evolution	legislation	pride	wisdom
excitement	leisure	productivity	work
fame	literature	progress	(but <i>art works</i>)

Non-count nouns do not have plural *-s* endings and cannot be used with *a* or *an*; they can be used with *the*. For example, we can say:

The advice he gave me was helpful.
He gave me *some* good *advice*.
I asked him for *advice*.

but not: The *advices* he gave me were helpful.
Please don't give me *an advice*.

Exercise 2

Here is a list of a few of the nouns that are always non-count. Use each in a sentence. Do not add -s endings to non-count nouns.

Example: homework My homework takes a lot of time.

1. advice _____
2. equipment _____
3. evidence _____
4. furniture _____
5. homework _____
6. housework _____
7. information _____
8. knowledge _____
9. mail _____
10. patience _____
11. research _____
12. software _____
13. work _____

Special Pattern #1: The following one-word modifiers modify singular count nouns. When they come in front of nouns, the nouns do not have plural -s endings.

<i>another</i>	Henry ordered <i>another hamburger</i> .
<i>one</i>	She owns <i>one car</i> .
<i>every</i>	<i>Every student</i> in the class is a freshman.
<i>each</i>	The teacher learned the name of <i>each child</i> .
<i>either</i>	You can choose <i>either movie</i> to watch.
<i>neither</i>	<i>Neither boy</i> brought his book to class.

Special Pattern #2:	<i>one of</i>	2 or more
	<i>every one of</i>	2 or more
	<i>each of</i>	2 or more
	<i>either of</i>	2 or more
	<i>neither of</i>	2 or more

Examples:

One of my sisters lives in Texas.

Every one of my friends is coming to the party.

Each of my aunts has two children.

Either of the two books is worth reading.

Neither of the two films sounds worthwhile to me.

In Pattern #2, the nouns following *of* have *-s* endings because they refer to more than one—two or more *sisters*, several *friends*, two or more *aunts*, two *books*, and two *films*.

Notice the important difference between Pattern #1 and Pattern #2:

#1: If the single word *another*, *one*, *every*, *each*, *either*, or *neither* comes before the count noun, the noun is singular and does not have an *-s* ending.

#2: If the words *one of*, *every one of*, *each of*, *either of*, or *neither of* come before a count noun, the noun is plural and must have an *-s* ending.

An important sign of the difference is the word *of*.

Exercise 3

In the following sentences, correct any plural *-s* ending errors that you find. Watch for Special Pattern #1 and Special Pattern #2 discussed on the previous page.

Examples: incorrect: Every students got an A in the midterm.
 correct: Every **student** got an A in the midterm.

 incorrect: One of my aunt owns a Fiat.
 correct: One of my **aunts** owns a Fiat.

DO NOT REWRITE THE WHOLE SENTENCE. JUST FIX THE PROBLEM

1. One of my favorite movie is on television tonight.
2. Lois likes to dance with one of her old boyfriend.
3. Each students needs to do his part of the research project.
4. Each of the student is writing about an aspect of urban pollution.
5. Every one of my relative is coming to the family reunion.
6. Julie wants to buy another cars.
7. Neither of her old car runs any more.

8. You can choose either of the dessert.
9. You should wear one of your new shirt.
10. Every freshmen has to adjust to a new campus.
11. Every one of Jane's novel gets published.
12. I spent two hours cleaning each rooms.

Exercise 4

In the following exercise, you will practice the patterns we've covered so far. Correct any plural -s ending errors that you find. Add -s endings to count nouns that should be plural, and cross out -s endings on singular count nouns or non-count nouns.

DO NOT REWRITE THE WHOLE SENTENCE. JUST FIX THE PROBLEM

incorrect: Many student in the class were doing their homeworks.

correct: Many **students** in the class were doing their **homework**.

1. University student usually work part-time.
2. Every teachers gave a lot of test last semester.
3. Adolescence is one of the most important period in our lives.
4. I enjoy many kind of entertainments.
5. I found a lot of informations about social problem in the library.
6. Maria has several pet—one dog, three birds and four hamster—and she takes good cares of each ones.
7. Both country have large population.
8. Carl needs new furnitures for his living room, but he doesn't want to spend a lot of money on more junks.
9. Student should evaluate their teachers because students are the one who know if their teacher are effective.
10. Most of my neighbor paved their driveway with stones.
11. One of my oldest friend arrives on Friday, and every times he comes, I'm happy to see him.
12. It's fun to do researches with another students.
13. Each computers is working, but we can't find the softwares we need.
14. Neither of my brother has a job, so they have to do all the houseworks.

Exercise 5

Correct the plural *-s* ending errors in the following paragraph. Add *-s* endings to some nouns that should be plural, and cross out *-s* endings on nouns that should be singular or non-count.

Some educators believe that reducing class size is just one small step toward improving elementary education while other believe that there is no evidences to show that reducing class size will improve students' performance. Some teachers feel that, with fewer student, they will be able to give more individual attentions to student who need help with homeworks and more individual help in laboratory classes like biology and chemistry. School administrator hope that the class-size reduction program will eventually affect all student in kindergarten through third grade, at every schools. But some teachers and administrator think that school will still have problems even if classes are small because school don't have the necessary equipments and trained teacher to provide good instruction.