

Noun



~ English Grammar · Competitive Exams ~



A **noun** is a word that names a person, place, thing, animal, quality or idea.
Ram, Delhi, table, cow, honesty.

① Kinds of Noun

Proper	name of a particular person/place. Ram · Mohan · India · Ganga
Common	name common to a whole class. boy · city · river · book
Collective	a group taken as one. team · army · crowd · jury · herd
Material	a substance / matter. gold · water · tea · iron · wood
Abstract	a quality / idea we cannot touch. honesty · height · length · love



Countable or not? **Common** & most **Collective** nouns are countable; **Material** & **Abstract** nouns are uncountable – that decides their number.

One big rule to remember

Proper, Abstract and Material nouns are normally NOT used in the plural.

Two Ram ✗ many honesties ✗ some golds ✗

Proper → often begins with a Capital

Material → weighed, not counted

Collective → usually a singular verb

Abstract → formed from adj./verb

② Number – Singular & Plural

The form that tells us **one** or **more than one** is called **Number**.

Singular

one only

a book · a pen · an orator

Plural

two or more

books · girls · cows

Rules to form the Plural

1. Usually add **-s**. boy→boys · girl→girls · cow→cows
2. Ends in **s, x, ch, sh, z, ss** → add **-es**. bus→buses · tax→taxes · watch→watches · bush→bushes · class→classes
But if **ch** sounds like 'k' → add only **-s**: stomach→stomachs, monarch→monarchs, conch→conchs.
3. **Consonant + y** → change **y** to **-ies**. army→armies · lady→ladies · city→cities · story→stories
But vowel + **y** → add only **-s**: boy→boys, day→days, toy→toys.
4. Ends in **o** → add **-es**. mango→mangoes · potato→potatoes · hero→heroes · mosquito→mosquitoes
Exceptions: photo→photos, kilo→kilos, piano→pianos, radio→radios, studio→studios, bamboo→bamboos.
5. Ends in **f / fe** → change to **-ves**. knife→knives · wife→wives · half→halves · leaf→leaves · thief→thieves
Exceptions: chief→chiefs, dwarf→dwarfs, proof→proofs, safe→safes, belief→beliefs, grief→griefs, staff→staffs.

consonant + y → ies · vowel + y → only ~~s~~



Exam trap → examiners love the **y** and **o** rules. Always check the letter **before y** (vowel or consonant) before you add the ending.

Plural – special forms

6. **Vowel change (mutation)** — no -s at all. man→men · woman→women · foot→feet · tooth→teeth · goose→geese · mouse→mice · louse→lice
7. A few add **-en**. ox→oxen · child→children · brother→brethren

8. Compound Nouns – pluralise the MAIN word

Type	Singular	Plural
Main word	chief-minister	chief-ministers
Main word	court-martial	courts-martial
Word before prep.	father-in-law	fathers-in-law
Word before prep.	commander-in-chief	commanders-in-chief
Word before prep.	passer-by	passers-by
Both parts (man/woman)	man-servant	men-servants
Only end (-man words)	postman · milkman	postmen · milkmen

9. Foreign Plurals – learn by heart

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
criterion	criteria	phenomenon	phenomena
medium	media	datum	data
index	indices	radius	radii
axis	axes	basis	bases
formula	formulae	memorandum	memoranda
bacterium	bacteria	stratum	strata
maximum	maxima	series	series



Singular slip-up → **media, data, criteria, phenomena** are already PLURAL. One item = medium, datum, criterion, phenomenon.

③ Number in Use

Dozen · Hundred · Thousand · Score

After a **definite number** they take **no -s**.

~~two dozens eggs~~ → **two dozen eggs**

~~three thousands rupees~~ → **three thousand rupees**

But for a vague number, add **-s + of**: hundreds of people · a few dozens of pens.

Words that demand a **PLURAL** noun

a lot of · lots of · plenty of · a number of · the number of · one of · most of → + plural countable noun.

~~a lot of book~~ → **a lot of books** · ~~one of the student~~ → **one of the students**

a number of → plural verb · **the number of** → singular verb

Each of / Either of / Neither of

Structure → **Each / Either / Neither of + the + plural noun** (but singular verb).

~~Either of the boy~~ → **Either of the boys**

~~Neither of the woman~~ → **Neither of the women**

Material Noun + 's' = new meaning

Word	Plural form	New meaning
iron	irons	fetters / chains
wood	woods	a forest
air	airs	arrogance / pretence
force	forces	the army / troops
people	peoples	nations / races
advice	advices	reports / information



See the shift → "The works of Shakespeare" = his writings; "the waters of the Ganga" = the river's expanse. The **-s** changes the meaning!

④ Tricky Number Nouns

Always SINGULAR

Mathematics · Physics · Politics
News · Jewellery · Furniture
Crocery · Luggage · Baggage
Scenery · Poetry · Information
Food · Music · Science · Society

→ take a **singular verb**. *News is good.*

Always PLURAL

Scissors · Spectacles
Trousers · Measles
Billiards · Mumps
Police · Public
Poultry · Peasantry

→ take a **plural verb**. *Scissors are new.*



Add **a pair of** and they turn SINGULAR → *A pair of scissors is sharp.* · *A pair of spectacles has been framed.*

Two exam favourites

1. Mathematics / Physics / Politics are singular — **but** when **particularised / possessed** they take a plural verb.

~~His mathematics is weak~~ → **His mathematics are weak.** · **The politics of India are dirty.**

2. Noun + preposition + same noun → both nouns stay **singular**.

~~villages after villages~~ → **village after village** was swept away.

Quick Tips

- ✓ Uncountables (furniture, luggage, information, advice) have **no plural** and take a singular verb.
- ✓ Count them with a helper → *a piece of furniture, an item of news, a bit of advice.*
- ✓ Collective nouns → singular verb for one unit; plural verb only when members act separately.
- ✓ **Many a / More than one** + singular noun + singular verb. *Many a student has passed.*

⑤ Gender 🔍

Gender	Meaning	Examples
Masculine	male	boy, king, lion, hero
Feminine	female	girl, queen, lioness, heroine
Common	either sex	child, teacher, friend, student
Neuter	lifeless thing	table, pen, book, stone

Making the feminine → add **-ess** (host→hostess, prince→princess), change the word (uncle→aunt, nephew→niece), or change the first part (grandfather→grandmother).

⑥ Case

Case shows the **relation** of a noun to the rest of the sentence.

Nominative

the doer / subject
Ram plays.

Objective

receives action
I met **Ram**.

Possessive

ownership
Ram's book.

Three ways to show Possession

(i) **'s** → for living things. Ram's book · the boy's bag

(ii) **' only** → for plural nouns ending in -s. boys' college · girls' hostel

(iii) **of** → for non-living things. the roof of the house



Golden rule → use **'s** for **living** things, but **of** for **non-living** things. The leg of the table – never the table's leg.

Apostrophe Rules – X → ✓

the exact points examiners test again and again

1. Non-living → use **of**. ~~the house's roof~~ → **the roof of the house**
2. Plural ending in -s → only '. ~~boys's college~~ → **boys' college**. But plural without -s → **men's, women's, children's**.
3. Compound noun → 's on the **last** word. ~~father's-in-law house~~ → **father-in-law's house**
4. Noun of apposition → 's on the second noun. Tagore, the poet's house · I met my brother Ram's sister.
5. **this / that / a / an + Noun + of + Noun** → no 's at the end. ~~this advice of Mr. Rao's~~ → **this advice of Mr. Rao**.
6. Noun with a relative pronoun → use **of**. ~~Ali's house who is a singer~~ → **the house of Ali who is a singer**.
7. Indefinite pronouns take 's. somebody's pen. With **else** → 's goes on **else**: **anybody else's book**.
8. Hissing / classical names → only '. for goodness' sake · for conscience' sake · Moses' law · Jesus' death.
9. **The + adjective** (a class of people) → use **of**. ~~the poor's problem~~ → **the problem of the poor**.
10. City, village, court, town, hostel → use **of**. ~~city's life~~ → **the life of the city**.
11. everything, nothing, both, each → use **of**. ~~both's names~~ → **the names of both**.
12. Two consecutive nouns → no double 's. ~~Ram's wife's brother~~ → **the brother of Ram's wife**.

(Living → 's · Non-living → of · Plural + s → only)



Special OK → time, ships & personified nouns keep 's: a day's work · the ship's arrival · the plane's departure · a stone's throw.

⑦ Spot the Error ⚠

Find the part (a / b / c / d) that has the error.

1. Neither of (a) / the woman (b) / is (c) / present. (d)
2. Two dozens (a) / eggs have (b) / been (c) / bought. (d)
3. A number of (a) / students is (b) / going to (c) / the class picnic. (d)
4. All the chiefs-minister (a) / are responsible (b) / for the condition (c) / of their states. (d)
5. The natural (a) / sceneries of (b) / this place (c) / is worth praising. (d)
6. Some phenomenon (a) / of nature (b) / are difficult (c) / to explain. (d)
7. Father-in-laws (a) / are generally (b) / responsible for (c) / dowry deaths. (d)
8. One of my best (a) / friend is (b) / both a novelist (c) / and a poet. (d)
9. A table's legs (a) / have been (b) / broken by (c) / Mohan's brother. (d)
10. The number (a) / of applicants (b) / for various jobs (c) / are increasing. (d)

Answer Key

1→(b) the women — neither of + plural noun. 2→(a) two dozen — no -s after a fixed number.
3→(b) students are — a number of takes plural. 4→(a) chief-ministers — pluralise the main word.
5→(b) scenery — uncountable, no plural. 6→(a) phenomena — some + plural. 7→(a) fathers-in-law — pluralise word before the preposition.
8→(b) friends — one of + plural noun. 9→(a) the legs of a table — no 's with non-living things. 10→(d) is increasing — the number of takes a singular verb.



Exam habit → on every noun ask three things: is it **countable**? what is its **number**? and does the possessive need **'s** or **of**?

☆ Name it right — number, gender, case! ☆