

Year 1 · Free resource

Plurals and verb suffixes: **-s** and **-es**

Year group: 1

Source: DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling*, National Curriculum for England (2013) — Year 1

Curriculum requirement: Statutory

The rule

Most nouns add **-s** to make a plural. Most verbs add **-s** for the third person singular (he/she/it).

cat → **cats** · *dog* → **dogs** · *book* → **books**

she runs · *he jumps* · *it works*

But when a word ends in **-s**, **-ss**, **-sh**, **-ch**, **-x**, or **-z**, add **-es** instead — because you cannot say the *s* without adding a vowel sound first.

bus → **buses** (/bʌsɪz/)

wish → **wishes** (/wɪʃɪz/)

watch → **watches** (/wɒtʃɪz/)

fox → **foxes** (/fɒksɪz/)

When to add *-s* and when to add *-es*

Word ending	Plural / 3rd person	Example
Most endings	+ <i>-s</i>	cats, dogs, runs, jumps
<i>-s</i>	+ <i>-es</i>	buses, gases
<i>-ss</i>	+ <i>-es</i>	classes, grasses, bosses
<i>-sh</i>	+ <i>-es</i>	wishes, brushes, dishes
<i>-ch</i>	+ <i>-es</i>	watches, churches, beaches
<i>-x</i>	+ <i>-es</i>	foxes, boxes, mixes
<i>-z</i>	+ <i>-es</i>	quizzes, buzzes

Why? Try saying *watches* — you can't. Your mouth automatically adds a vowel (/ɪz/) between the *ch* and the *s*. The *-es* spelling records that extra syllable.

The **-y to -ies** rule (introduced at Y1, deepened at Y2)

When a word ends in **consonant + y**, change the *y* to *i* and add *-es*:

fly → ***flies*** · *cry* → ***cries*** · *baby* → ***babies***

When a word ends in **vowel + y**, just add *-s*:

play → ***plays*** · *day* → ***days*** · *boy* → ***boys***

Examples

Simple -s: cats · dogs · books · pens · cars · trees · flowers · birds · girls · boys · hands · feet
(irregular) · cups · plates · spoons

-es (after -s/-ss/-sh/-ch/-x/-z): buses · classes · wishes · watches · boxes · foxes · churches ·
dishes · branches · beaches · mixes · buzzes · quizzes

-ies (consonant + y → ies): flies · cries · tries · babies · puppies · ladies · cities · stories · families
· cherries · pennies · fairies · factories

-s after vowel + y: days · plays · boys · toys · ways · keys · monkeys · turkeys · donkeys

Common mistakes

Wrong	Right	Reason
<i>boxs</i>	boxes	<i>x</i> → add <i>-es</i>
<i>churchs</i>	churches	<i>ch</i> → add <i>-es</i>
<i>babys</i>	babies	consonant + <i>y</i> → <i>-ies</i>
<i>plaies</i>	plays	vowel + <i>y</i> → just <i>-s</i>
<i>wishs</i>	wishes	<i>sh</i> → add <i>-es</i>
<i>watchs</i>	watches	<i>ch</i> → add <i>-es</i>

Word sort

Add the correct plural. Sort by which ending you used.

Words: cat · wish · bus · fly · day · fox · church · baby · boy · dish · watch · play · class · monkey · story

+ <i>-s</i>	+ <i>-es</i>	+ <i>-ies</i>

Dictation sentences

The **foxes** ran across the field while the **dogs** chased the **birds**.

She had three **wishes** and spent her **days** thinking about what to choose.

The **babies** played with their **toys** while the **buses** rumbled past.

He put the **boxes** on the **shelves** and sorted the **dishes** into **piles**.

The **stories** she told about the **churches** and **cities** kept everyone **quiet**.

Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). All examples verified against Year 1 statutory content.