

The Plural of Compound Nouns

How to form the plural of compound nouns

1. The plurals of compound nouns are generally formed by adding 's' to the main word (i.e. the most significant word in the compound), also called the **head of the compound**. The head **informs us about what the compound refers to**. The other elements of the compound modify the head and are called the **head's dependents**.

Examples:

compounds	head	plural
car park	park	car parks
blackboard	board	blackboards
mother-in-law	mother	mothers-in-law
taxi driver	driver	taxi drivers

2. Compound nouns **with -ful**
Compound nouns with '-ful' (e.g. truckful, handful) may have two possible plurals. The 's' can be added either to:

- a. the head noun

compounds	head	plural
Truckful	truck	trucksful
Handful	hand	handsful
Spoonful	spoon	spoonsful

- b. or to '-ful '

compounds	plural
Truckful	truckfuls
Handful	handfuls
Spoonful	spoonfuls

3. Compound nouns **ending in a preposition**

When the compound is formed with a noun and a preposition, (e.g. passer-by), the plural is formed by adding an 's' to the noun.

Examples:

Compound Noun	Plural
passer-by	passers-by
hanger-on	hangers-on

4. When **neither element** of a compound **is a noun**, the plural is formed by **adding 's' to the last word**. For example, the compound noun 'grown-up' is made of the word 'grown',

which is the past participle of the verb 'grow', and the preposition 'up'. The plural of 'grown-up' is formed by adding 's' to 'up'

Compound Noun	Plural
grown-up	grown-ups
go-between	go-betweens
check-in	check-ins
higher-up	higher-ups

Exercise:

Complete with the right plural of the compound nouns

1. The elderly spend most of their time looking at the passer-by.
2. Does this hotel allow early check-in?
3. The association planted some apple tree.
4. Women and their mother-in-law are often in disagreement.
5. Are there any shoe shop nearby?
6. Take two spoonful of honey before you go to bed.
7. I have two penfriend from the UK.
8. Get off after two bus stop.
9. She bought two tool box.
10. They are good-for-nothing who never take responsibility for their lives.