



Understanding the concept of irregular plurals can be rather challenging, especially for beginners. In many languages with Latin roots, the plural is formed by adding an "-s" at the end of the word. However, in English, there are many words which are plural but do not bear an "-s" at the end. That might be because they have an irregular plural form or because they have a Latin or Greek plural.

Some of the most important **irregular plural** words are:

- **child (sing.) - children (pl.)**
- **foot - feet**
- **man - men**
- **woman - women**
- **tooth - teeth**
- **sheep - sheep** (no changes in form)
- **mouse - mice**

**Latin plurals** are also quite common in English and can be difficult to identify in a conversation. Words whose roots come from the Latin language sometimes acquire their plural forms from their roots. Here are some examples to help you understand:

- **criterion (sing.) - criteria (pl.)**

"The only **criterion** for being accepted on the course is that you should have a bachelor's degree" --- *only one criterion*

"What **criteria** do you have for selecting students for the masters degree?" --- *more than one criterion*

- **basis - bases**
- **crisis - crises**
- **index - indices**
- **minimum - minima**
- **thesis - theses**



Now let's talk about something which is related to using plural forms correctly - subject/verb agreement. It's important to remark that not all words that end in "-s" are plural, for example:

- Athletics: "Athletics **is** very popular in the USA."
- Genetics: "Genetics **is** the study of heredity and the variation of inherited characteristics."
- Gymnastics: "Gymnastics **involves** exercises on uneven bars, balance beam, floor, etc"
- News: "The news **looks** good today."

There are a few English **collective nouns** which should only be used with a plural verb:

- Police: "The police **are** investigating the crime"
- Family: "The whole family **were** at the table"
- Government: "The government **are** doing a good job"

In American English, though, it is possible to use singular verbs with collective nouns.

And last but not least, we must remember that we also use singular verbs with **plural subjects** describing a **single unit**:

- **5 Euros** is not much. (single unit: money)
- **Peas and carrots** is my favourite food. (single unit: dish)