Special English Grammar

Nouns

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Nouns

I. Kinds and function

A There are four kinds of noun in English:

Common nouns : dog, man, table
Proper nouns : France, Madrid, Mrs Sok, Dara
Abstract nouns : beauty, chantry, courage, fear, joy
Collective nouns : crowd, flock, group, swarm, team

B A noun can function as:

The subject of a verb : Tom arrived.

The complement of the verbs (be, become, seem):

Tom is an actor.

The object of a verb : I saw Tom.

The object of a preposition : I spoke to Tom.

A noun can also be in the possessive case: Tom's books.

II. Gender

A Masculine: men, boys and male animals (pronoun he/they).

Feminine : women, girls and female animals
(pronoun she/they).

**Neuter**: *inanimate* things, animals whose sex we don't know and sometimes babies whose sex we don't know (pronoun it/they).

**Exceptions**: ships and sometimes cars and other vehicles when *regarded* with affection or respect are considered feminine. Countries when referred to by name are also normally considered feminine.

*The ship struck an iceberg, which tore a huge hole in her side.*

*Scotland lost many of her bravest men in two great rebellions.*

**B Masculine/feminine nouns denoting people**

1 Different forms;

(a) boy, girl gentleman, lady, son, daughter

bachelor, spinster, husband, wifeuncle, aunt

bridegroom, bride, man, woman widower, widow

father, mother, nephew, niece

**Main exceptions:**

baby infant relative

child parent spouse
cousin relation teenager

(b) duke, duchess, king, queen prince, princess
earl, countess, lord, lady

2 The majority of nouns indicating occupation have the same form:
artist cook driver guide
assistant dancer doctor etc.

Main exceptions:
actor, actress host, hostess, conductor, conductress,
manager, manageress, heir, Heiress steward, stewardess
hero, heroine waiter, waitress.

Also salesman, saleswoman etc., but sometimes -person is
used instead of -man, -woman: salesperson, spokesperson.

C Domestic animals and many of the larger wild animals have
different forms:
bull, cow duck, drake ram, ewe stallion, mare
cock, hen gander, goose stag, doe tiger, tigress
dog, bitch lion, lioness

Others have the same form.
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III. Plurals

A The plural of a noun is usually made by adding s to the singular:

   day, days  dog, dogs  house, houses

s is pronounced /s/ after a p, k or f sound. Otherwise it is pronounced /z/.

When s is placed after ce, ge, se or ze an extra syllable (/iz/) is added to the spoken word.

Other plural forms

B Nouns ending in o or ch, sh, ss or x form their plural by adding es:

   tomato, tomatoes  brush, brushes  box, boxes

   church, churches  kiss, kisses

But words of foreign origin or abbreviated words ending in o add s only:

   dynamo, dynamos  kimono, kimonos  piano, pianos

   kilo, kilos  photo, photos  soprano, sopranos

When es is placed after ch, sh, ss or x an extra syllable (/iz/) is added to the spoken word.

C Nouns ending in y following a consonant form their plural by dropping the y and adding ies:
baby, babies  country, countries  fly, flies  lady, ladies

Nouns ending in y following a vowel form their plural by adding s:

boy, boys  day, days  donkey, donkeys  guy, guys

D  Twelve nouns ending in f or fe drop the f or fe and add ves.

These nouns are calf, half, knife, leaf, life, loaf, self, sheaf, shelf, thief, wife, wolf:

loaf, loaves  wife, wives  wolf, wolves  etc.

The nouns hoof, scar, and wharf take either s or ves in the plural:

hoofs or hooves  scarfs or scarves  wharfs or wharves

Other words ending in f or fe add s in the ordinary way:

cliff, cliffs  handkerchief, handkerchiefs  safe, safes

E  A few nouns form their plural by a vowel change:

foot, feet  louse, lice  mouse, mice  woman, women

goose, geese  man, men  tooth, teeth

The plurals of child and ox are children, oxen.

F  Names of certain creatures do not change in the plural.

fish is normally unchanged, fishes exists but is uncommon.

Some types of fish do not normally change in the plural:
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carp     pike    salmon    trout

cod      plaice  squid    turbot, mackerel

but if used in a plural sense they would take a plural verb.

Others add s:

    crabs    herrings    sardines

    eels      lobsters    sharks

deer and sheep do not change: one sheep, two sheep.

Sportsmen who shoot duck, partridge, pheasant etc. use the same form for singular and plural. But other people normally add s for the plural: ducks, partridges, pheasants.

The word game. used by sportsmen to mean an animal/animals hunted, is always in the singular, and takes a singular verb.

G  A few other words don’t change:

    aircraft, craft (boat/boats)    quid (slang for £1}

    counsel (barristers working in court)

Some measurements and numbers do not change
Collective nouns, *crew, family, team* etc. can take a singular or plural verb; singular if we consider the word to mean a single group or unit:

*Our team is the best*

or plural if we take it to mean a number of individuals:

*Our team are wearing their new jerseys.*

When a possessive adjective is necessary, a plural verb with *their* is more usual than a singular verb with *its*, though sometimes both are possible:

*The Jury is considering its verdict.*

*The jury are considering their verdict.*

Certain words are always plural and take a plural verb:

*Clothes  police*

garments consisting of two parts:

*breeches  pants  pyjama  trousers* etc.

and tools and instruments consisting of two parts:

*binoculars  pliers  scissors  spectacles  glasses  scales  shears* etc.

Also certain other words including:
arms (weapons)  particulars

damages (compensation)  premises/quarters

earnings  riches

goods/wares  savings

greens (vegetables)  spirits (alcohol)

grounds  stairs

outskirts  surroundings

pains (trouble/effort)  valuables

J  A number words ending in ics, acoustics, athletics, ethics, hysterics. mathematics, physics, politics etc., which are plural in form, normally take a plural verb:

His mathematics are weak.

But names of sciences can sometimes be considered singular:

Mathematics is an exact science.

K  Words plural in form but singular in meaning include news:

The news is good

certain diseases:

mumps  rickets  shingles
and certain games:

billiards  darts  draughts bowls  dominoes

Some words which retain their original Greek or Latin forms make their plurals according to the rules of Greek and Latin:

crisis, crises, phenomenon, phenomena

erratum, errata, radius, radii, memorandum,
memorandum, terminus, termini, oasis, oases

But some follow the English rules:

dogma, dogmas  gymnasium, gymnasiums

formula, formulas (though formulae is used by scientists)

Sometimes there are two plural forms with different meanings:

appendix, appendixes or appendices (medical terms)

appendix, appendices (addition/s to a book)

index, indexes (in books), indices (in mathematics)

Musicians usually prefer Italian plural forms for Italian musical terms:

libretto, libretti  tempo, tempi

But s is also possible: librettos, tempos.
M Compound nouns

1 Normally the last word is made plural:

   boy-friends  break-ins  travel agents

   But where man and woman is prefixed both parts are made plural:

   men drivers  women drivers

2 The first word is made plural with compounds formed of verb +
er nouns + adverbs:

   hangers-onlookers-on  runners-up

   and with compounds composed of noun + preposition + noun:

   ladies-in-waiting sisters-in-law  wards of court

3 Initials can be made plural:

   MPs (Members of Parliament)

   VIPs (very important persons)

   OAPs (old age pensioners)

   UFOs (unidentified flying objects)
IV. Uncountable nouns

(also known as non-count nouns or mass nouns)

A 1 Names of substances considered generally:

- bread
- cream
- gold
- paper
- tea
- beer
- dust
- ice
- sand
- wafer
- cloth
- gin
- jam
- soap
- wine
- coffee
- glass
- oil
- stone
- wood

2 Abstract nouns:

- advice
- experience
- horror
- pity
- beauty
- fear
- information
- relief
- courage
- help
- knowledge
- suspicion
- death
- hope
- mercy
- work

3 Also considered uncountable in English:

- baggage
- damage
- luggage
- shopping
- camping
- furniture
- parking
- weather

These, with hair, information, knowledge, news, rubbish, are sometimes countable in other languages.
Uncountable nouns are always singular and are not used with a/an:

I don't want (any) advice or help. I want (some) information.

He has had no experience in this sort of work.

These nouns are often preceded by some, any, no, a little etc. or by nouns such as bit, piece, slice etc. + of:

a bit of news  a grain of sand  a pot of jam
a cake of soap  a pane of glass  a sheet of paper
a drop of oil  a piece of advice

Many of the nouns in the above groups can be used in a particular sense and are then countable and can take a/an in the singular. Some examples are given below.

hair (all the hair on one's head) is considered uncountable, but if we consider each hair separately we say one hair, two hairs etc.:

Her hair is black. Whenever she finds a grey hair she pulls it out.
We drink beer, coffee, gin, but we can ask for a (cup of) coffee, a gin, two gins etc. We drink out of glasses. We can walk in woods.

**experience** meaning 'something which happened to someone' is countable:

*He had an exciting experience/some exciting experiences (= adventure/s) last week.*

**work** meaning 'occupation/employment/a job/jobs' is singular:

*He is looking/or work/for a job. I do homework.*

*She does housework.*

But roadworks mean 'repair of roads'.

**works** (plural only) can mean 'factory' or 'moving parts of a machine'.

**works** (usually plural) can be used of literary or musical compositions:

*Shakespeare's complete works.*

D Some abstract nouns can be used in a particular sense with **a/an**, but in the singular only:
a help:

My children are a great help to me. A good map would be a help.

a relief:

It was a relief to sit down.

a knowledge + of:

He had a good knowledge of mathematics.

a dislike/dread/hatred/horror/love + of is also possible:

a love of music a hatred of violence

a mercy/pity/shame/wonder can be used with that-clauses introduced by it:

It's a pity you weren't here. It's a shame he wasn't paid.

E a fear/fears, a hope/hopes, a suspicion/suspicions

These can be used with that-clauses introduced by there:

There is a fear/There are fears that he has been murdered.

We can also have a suspicion that... Something can arouse a fear/fears, a hope/hopes, a suspicion/suspicions.
V. The form of the possessive/genitive case

A 's is used with singular nouns and plural nouns not ending in s:

- a man's job  the people's choice
- men's work  the crew's quarters
- a woman's intuition  the horse's mouth
- the butcher's (shop)  the bull's horns
- a child's voice  women's clothes
- the children's room  Russia's exports

B A simple apostrophe (') is used with plural nouns ending in s:

- a girls' school  the students' hostel
- the eagles' nest the Smiths' car

C Classical names ending in s usually add only the apostrophe:

- Pythagoras’ Theorem  Archimedes’ Law  Sophocles’ plays

D Other names ending in s can take 's or the apostrophe alone;
Mr Jones's (w Mr Jones' house) Yeats's (or Yeats') poems

With compounds, the last word takes the 's:

my brother-in-law's guitar

Names consisting of several words are treated similarly:

Henry the Eighth's wives the Prince of Wales's helicopter

's can also be used after initials:

the PM's secretary the MP's briefcase the VIP's escort

Note that when the possessive case is used, the article before the person or thing 'possessed' disappears:

the daughter of the politician = the politician's daughter

the intervention of America = America's intervention

the plays of Shakespeare = Shakespeare's plays

VI. Use of the possessive/genitive case and of + noun

A The possessive case is chiefly used of people, countries or animals as shown above- It can also be used:

1 Of ships and boats: the ship's bell. the yacht's mast
2 Of planes, trains, cars and other vehicles, though here the of construction is safer:

a glider's wings or the wings of a glider the train's heating system or the heating system of the train

3 In time expressions:

* a week's holiday, today's paper tomorrow's weather
* in two years' time, ten minutes' break, two hours’ delay

a ten-minute break, a two-hour delay are also possible:

* We have ten minutes’ break/a ten-minute break.

4 In expressions of money + **worth**:

* £1 's worth of stamps ten dollars' worth of ice-cream

5 With **for** + noun + **sake**: for heaven's sake, for goodness’ sake

6 In a few expressions such as:

* a stone's throw, Journey's end, the water's edge

7 We can say either a winter's day or a winter day and a summer's day or a summer day, but we cannot make spring or autumn possessive, except when they are personified:

* Autumn's return.
Sometimes certain nouns can be used in the possessive case without the second noun. a/the
baker's/butcher's/chemist's/florist's etc. can mean 'a/the
baker's/butcher's etc. shop'. Similarly, a/the house
agent's/travel agent's etc. (office) and the dentist 's/doctor
's/vet 's (surgery):

>You can buy it at the chemist's. He's going to the dentist's.

Names of the owners of some businesses can be used similarly:

_Sotheby's, Claridge's_

Some very well-known shops etc. call themselves by the possessive form and some drop the apostrophe: _Foyles, Harrods._

Names of people can sometimes be used similarly to mean '. .. . 's house':

_We had lunch at Bill's. We met at Ann's._

**B of + noun is used for possession:**

1 When the possessor noun is followed by a phrase or clause:
The boys ran about, obeying the directions of a man with a whistle.

I took the advice of a couple I met (in the train and hired a car).

2 With inanimate 'possessors', except those listed in A above:

the walls of the town the roof of the church

the keys of the car

However, it is often possible to replace noun X + of + noun Y by noun Y + noun X in that order:

the town walls the church roof the car keys

The first noun becomes a sort of adjective and is not made plural:

the roofs of the churches = the church roofs (see 16)

Unfortunately noun + of + noun combinations cannot always be replaced in this way and the student is advised to use of when in doubt.

VII. Compound nouns
A Examples of these:

1 Noun + noun:

- London Transport  Fleet Street  Tower bridge
- hall door  traffic warden  petrol tank
- hitch-hiker  sky-jacker  river bank
- kitchen table  winter clothes

2 Noun + gerund:

- fruit picking  lorry driving  coal-mining
- weight-lifting  bird-watching  surf-riding

3 Gerund + noun:

- waiting list  diving-board  driving licence
- landing card  dining-room  swimming pool

B Some ways in which these combinations can be used:

1 When the second noun belongs to or is part of the first:

- shop window  picture frame  college library
- church bell  garden gate  gear lever

But words denoting quantity: lump, part, piece, slice etc. cannot be used in this way:

- a piece of cake  a slice of bread
2 The first noun can indicate the place of the second:

- city street
- corner shop
- country lane
- street market

3 The first noun can indicate the time of the second:

- summer holiday
- Sunday paper
- November fogs
- spring flowers
- dawn chorus

4 The first noun can state the material of which the second is made:

- steel door
- rope ladder
- gold medal
- stone wall
- silk shirt

Wool and wood are not used here as they have adjective forms: woollen and wooden, gold has an adjective form golden, but this is used only figuratively;

- a golden handshake
- a golden opportunity
- golden hair

5 The first word can indicate the purpose of the second:

- coffee cup
- escape hatch
- chess board
- reading lamp
- skating rink
- tin opener
- golf club
- notice board
- football ground
6 Work areas, such as factory, farm, mine etc., can be preceded by the name of the article produced:

- fish-farm
- gold-mine
- oil-rig

or the type of work done:

- inspection pit
- assembly plant
- decompression chamber

7 These combinations are often used of occupations, sports, hobbies and the people who practise them:

- sheep farming
- sheep farmer
- pop singer
- wind surfing
- water skier
- disc jockey

and for competitions:

- football match
- tennis tournament
- beauty contest
- car rally

8 The first noun can show what the second is about or concerned with.

A work of fiction may be a 'detective/murder/mystery/ghost/terror/spy story. We buy

- bus/train/plane tickets. We pay fuel/laundry/milk/telephone
bills, entry fees, income tax, car insurance, water rates, parking fines.

Similarly with committees, departments, talks, conferences etc.:

housing committee, education department, peace talks

9 These categories all overlap to some extent. They are not meant to be mutually exclusive, but aim to give the student some general idea of the uses of these combinations and help with the stress.

C As will be seen from the stress-marks above:

1 The first word is stressed in noun + gerund and gerund + noun combinations, when there is an idea of purpose as in B5 above, and in combinations of type B7 and B8 above.

2 Both words are usually stressed in combinations of types Al. Bl-3 above, but inevitably there are exceptions.
3 In place-name combinations both words usually have equal stress:

*King’s Road*  *Chroy Changva Bridge*  *Leicester Square*

But there is one important exception. In combinations where the last word is *Street*, the word *Street* is unstressed:

*Monivong Street*  *Norodom Street*

*End*

*Please us all successful in your life!!!*