

How to Use Singular and Plural Forms*

The technical literature contains a variety of singular and plural forms. Although in most cases such forms are obtained by observing basic rules, the use of other forms is not straightforward.

Nouns

Typical singular and plural forms of nouns are shown below:

broadcast,	broadcasts;
domino,	dominoes;
dynamo,	dynamos;
feature,	features;
machine,	machines;
organism,	organisms;
process,	processes;
presentation,	presentations;
proceeding,	proceedings;
property,	properties;
statistic,	statistics;
tactic,	tactics.

There are also specific singular and plural forms originating from Latin, Greek or other languages:

alumnus,	alumni;
analysis,	analyses;
antenna,	antennae, or antennas;
curriculum	curricula, or curriculums;
datum	data;
phenomenon,	phenomena;

and the plural form sometimes coincides with the singular form:

apparatus,	apparatus (or apparatuses).
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A noun may have several distinct meanings in English language depending on the context. As a result, a noun can be plural or singular (and also countable or uncountable) depending on the intended meaning:

chronology,	chronologies;
contrast,	contrasts;
craft,	crafts;
detail,	details;
examination,	examinations;
fruit,	fruits;
gold,	golds;
mechanic,	mechanics;
science,	sciences;
space,	spaces;
state,	states;
temperature,	temperatures;
time,	times.

The following nouns are uncountable:

agriculture, agronomy, algebra, arithmetic, botany, chromatography, cryptography, debris, electricity, equipment, geometry, knowledge, logic, magnetism, money, research and development (R & D), sugarcane, etc.

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Uncountable nouns can end with 's':

mathematics, physics, series, species.

Also, nouns ending with 's' can be both countable and uncountable:

electronics is, consumer electronics;

Nouns listed as uncountable could occasionally be used in plural:

research, many researches.

Indefinite and Definite Articles

The use of indefinite article 'a' or 'an' indicates a singular form:

an experiment, a calculation, a simulation, a theory;

or a determiner:

a few.

Singular/uncountable forms are also obtained with the use of definite article 'the':

the past, the present, the future, the State.

Adjectives

Certain words can be both adjectives and nouns:

<u>Adjective</u>	<u>Noun (Singular)</u>	<u>Noun (plural/uncountable)</u>
characteristic,	characteristic,	characteristics (plural);
dynamic,	dynamic,	dynamics (plural);
static,	static,	statics (uncountable).

Other adjectives are related to nouns which can be defined only if ending with 's' (plural or singular, countable or uncountable):

<u>Adjective</u>	<u>Noun</u>
basic,	basics;
economic,	economics;
genetic,	genetics;
graphic,	graphics;
heuristic,	heuristics;
kinematic,	kinematics;
logistic,	logistics;
optic,	optics;
static,	statics;
thermodynamic,	thermodynamics.

Verbs

In some cases, one has to distinguish verbs from nouns in a sentence:

<u>Verb</u>	<u>Noun (Singular)</u>	<u>Noun (Plural)</u>
partition,	partition,	partitions.
he/she/it partitions,		

Some Examples

The expression 'is one of' is preceded by a singular form and followed by a plural form. The expression 'none of' could be followed by both singular and plural forms.

The difference between the following singular and plural forms is self-explanatory:

author's result,	authors' results;
this one/that one,	these ones/those ones;
one piece,	one-piece cranks;
three-mode controller,	three modes.

Some words are used mainly in plural:

telecommunications science,

however, the singular form of said words can also be used on a case-by-case basis:

telecommunication switch, telecommunication union.