

Mr Bruff

ONLINE REVISION

MR Bruff's Guide To Grammar



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SAMPLE

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Chapter 3: Nouns

Teacher: Harry, give me a sentence that begins with 'I'.

Harry: I is—

Teacher: No, Harry! It's 'I am...'

Harry: OK! I am the ninth letter of the alphabet.

Imagine that grammar is made of bricks. Each brick is a chunk of language that does something different. This is called a part of speech. As you can see in the joke, parts of speech have to fit together properly, or your writing won't make sense.

There are nine parts of speech in total. If you can use them correctly, you'll increase your chances of gaining those valuable SPaG marks in exams.

Nouns

A noun is the name of a thing. When you have one thing (for example, a *pen*), it's a singular noun. When you have two or more, you make a plural by adding *-s* (for example, *pens*). Most plural nouns end with *-s*, but there are exceptions.

We'll start by revising how plural nouns are spelt. If we separate the letters of the alphabet into two groups, this will help you to understand the spelling rules.

It's straightforward: vowels are the letters A, E, I, O, U and consonants are all the other letters.

Irregular Spelling of Plural Nouns: Test Yourself!

You're now going to work out the spelling rules for making words plural. Some of the nouns in the chart on the next page follow the rule of adding *-s*, but others don't.

Unfortunately for you, the chart hasn't been finished. Read the words aloud and use your knowledge of vowels and consonants to work out the rules. In

column two, write down what's special about each singular noun. Then study its plural form and write spelling the rule in the last column. The first two have been done for you.

Spelling Rules for Making Plural Nouns

Example Singular Noun	What's special about the Singular Noun?	Example Plural Noun	Spelling Rule
story	consonant plus -y	stories	change -y to <i>-ies</i>
storey	vowel plus -y	storeys	add -s as normal
wolf		wolves	
life		lives	
cliff		cliffs	
witch		witches	
glass		glasses	
wish		wishes	
fox		foxes	
quiz		quizzes	
tomato		tomatoes	
zero		zeros	

Check your answers on the next page.

Answers

Example Singular Noun	What's special about the Singular Noun?	Example Plural Noun	Spelling Rule
story	consonant plus -y	stories	change -y to <i>-ies</i>
storey	vowel plus -y	storeys	add -s as normal
wolf	ends in -f	wolves	change -f to <i>-ves</i>
life	ends in -fe	lives	change <i>-fe</i> to <i>-ves</i>
cliff	ends in -ff	cliffs	add -s as normal
witch glass wish fox	end in <i>-ch</i> , <i>-s</i> , <i>-sh</i> , or <i>-x</i>	witches glasses wishes foxes	add <i>-es</i>
quiz	ends in -z	quizzes	double the -z and add <i>-es</i>
tomato	<i>ends in -o</i>	tomatoes	add <i>-es</i>
zero	<i>Ends in -o</i>	zeros	add -s as normal

Words ending in -o: Test Yourself!

Many words end in -o. Unfortunately, there's no rule for which ones take -s or -es in their plural form.

Use your dictionary to find words that end in -o. Check their plural forms and write them in the correct column below. Aim for at least five words in each column.

Plural for of nouns ending in -o

-s	-es

Test Yourself!

Read the sentences below. Put the noun in brackets in its plural form. Some are regular plurals, so be careful!

1. I have _____(pencil) and two pencil _____(sharpener) on my desk.
2. That man has had four _____(wife)!
3. How many _____(box) are in your car?
4. A shirt has a collar and two _____(cuff).
5. My school has two art _____(studio).
6. I like doing _____(quiz).
7. Every Sunday, my friend and I go to different _____(church).
8. I like autumn when _____(leaf) fall from the _____(tree).
9. I don't like _____(kiss) very much.
10. My _____(hero) are those who help others.

Answers

Now check your answers.

1. I have pencils and two pencil sharpeners on my desk.
2. That man has had four wives!
3. How many boxes are in your car?
4. A shirt has a collar and two cuffs.
5. My school has two art studios.
6. I like doing quizzes.
7. Every Sunday, my friend and I go to different churches.
8. I like autumn when leaves fall from the trees.
9. I don't like kisses very much.
10. My heroes are those who help others.

Fascinating Fact!

Some words take two plural forms. For example, *hoof* can be *hoofs* and also *hooves*.

Irregular plurals

Some words don't follow any rules at all and these are called irregular plurals. Here are some common ones:

man → *men*, *child* → *children*, *mouse* → *mice*, *foot* → *feet*,
woman → *women*, *person* → *people*, *analysis* → *analyses*

Other nouns don't change at all when they become plural. For example:

deer, *fish*, *sheep*, *offspring*, *series*, *species*

Spelling Tip!

When a teacher—of any subject—returns your work to you, note any spelling mistakes. Then write the corrections in a spelling log. Learn at least one correction every day.

Now we've reviewed the spelling rules, let's look at different types of nouns.

Concrete Nouns

These are things that you can touch (like concrete), see, smell, hear or taste. Other examples include:

chair, keyboard, money, water

Abstract Nouns

Abstract nouns are things that you cannot touch, see, smell, hear or taste. For example:

beauty, love, anger, freedom, bravery

Proper Nouns

Proper nouns name a specific person, place, organisation or thing. They always begin with a capital letter. For example:

Jim Smith, Swansea, Buckingham Palace, the Statue of Liberty

Collective Nouns

A group of things is called a collective noun. For example:

*a gaggle of geese
an anthology of poems*

Compound Nouns

Two or more nouns joined together make a compound noun. Some are joined with a hyphen and others are one word:

hosepipe, football, sister-in-law, stepfather

Fascinating Fact!

Many compound nouns have evolved over time. For example, a firefly used to be spelt as two words: *fire fly*. It then became *fire-fly* and finally *firefly*.

Countable Nouns

These are any nouns that you can count, so you can make them plural. For example:

boy (plural: boys), chair (plural: chairs), keyboard (plural: keyboards)

Uncountable Nouns

These are nouns that you can't count and they don't have a plural form. For example:

money, water, sugar

It might sound odd that we can't count these items—especially money! We count coins and pounds, but we have *bags, wallets* or *purses* (countable) of money. We also have *glasses* or *bottles* (countable) of water and *spoons* or *spoonfuls* (countable) of sugar.

Fascinating Fact!

A baby's first words are nouns.

Why Do I Need to Know about Nouns?

They can Help your Analytical Skills

When you're reading a fiction or non-fiction text, look for interesting nouns or clusters of particular nouns to analyse.

In this extract from *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins, the narrator asks Mr. Betteredge to write down the story of a stolen diamond:

"In this matter of the Diamond," he said, "the characters of innocent people have suffered under suspicion already—as you know. The memories of innocent people may suffer, hereafter, for want of a record of the facts to which those who come after us can appeal. There can be no doubt that this strange family story of ours ought to be told. And I think, Betteredge, Mr. Bruff and I together have hit on the right way of telling it."

The concrete noun *Diamond* looks odd as it has been capitalised to become a proper noun, emphasising its importance to the characters and story.

The abstract nouns *characters* (meaning reputations) and *suspicion* and *memories* set the tone of an enquiry—*The Moonstone* is, after all, believed to be the first ever detective novel in English!

The proper noun *Mr Bruff* (related, I wonder?) adds weight to the speaker's request. You sense that the speaker has ganged up with Mr. Bruff behind the scenes to persuade Mr. Betteredge to write his version of the story.

Of course, you don't have to label the nouns: your analysis is far more important. Terminology can add weight to what you say, however, and it's useful for English at A' Level...

They Show off your Vocabulary

Collective nouns are great for showcasing your range of vocabulary. How many do you already know?

Test Yourself!

Match the collective nouns below. The first one has been done for you.

1. A class of	a. people
2. An eloquence of	b. musicians
3. A crowd of	c. students
4. A board of	d. lawyers
5. A murder of	e. lions
6. A coven of	f. elephants
7. A prickle of	g. sheep
8. An orchestra of	h. kittens
9. A colony of	i. crows
10. A flock of	j. witches
11. A herd of	k. bees
12. A school of	l. directors
13. A pride of	m. hedgehogs
14. A swarm of	n. fish
15. A kindle of	o. ants

Check your answers on the next page.

Answers

1. C A class of students
2. d An eloquence of lawyers
3. a A crowd of people
4. l A board of directors
5. i A murder of crows
6. j A coven of witches
7. m A prickle of hedgehogs
8. b An orchestra of musicians
9. o A colony of ants
10. g A flock of sheep
11. f A herd of elephants
12. n A school of fish
13. e. A pride of lions
14. k. A swarm of bees
15. h A kindle of kittens

They Help you to Understand Grammar Rules

You can use your knowledge of nouns to work out grammar rules. Let's look at some examples:

a. *LESS AND FEWER*

Read the sentences below. Use your knowledge of nouns to work out the rules for when to use *less* and when to use *fewer*.

1. I have **fewer** pets than you.
2. During the drought, there was **less** water in the lake.
3. **Fewer** people are buying newspapers because they have **less** time to read them.
4. I'm spending more time at work but I'm earning **less** money.
5. I have **fewer** sweets than her!

Check your answer on the next page.

Answer

The rule is that we use *fewer* with plural countable nouns and *less* with uncountable nouns.

Exceptions

Less can be used with time:

My relationship with my boyfriend lasted less than five weeks.

You can count weeks, so you expect to use *fewer*. However, we're actually talking about **a block of time** and 'time' is uncountable. Therefore we say *less*.

Less can also be used with money and distance:

I have less than £2 in my pocket.

In less than three miles, I'll finish the marathon.

Test Yourself!

Review the rules and then write 'less' or 'fewer' in the spaces below:

1. Sorry, I can't go out tonight. I have _____ than £5 to spend.
2. _____ people went to the party than we expected.
3. Although I have _____ GCSEs than you, I have more common sense.
4. I have _____ time than I thought.
5. We have _____ than four months before our exams.
6. The _____ mistakes I make, the better my SPaG mark!
7. I need to drink _____ coffee.
8. However, I drink _____ cups of coffee than you!
9. More time, _____ haste!
10. I was standing _____ than one metre away from the tiger.

Check your answers on the next page.

Answers

1. Sorry, I can't go out tonight. I have less than £5 to spend.
2. Fewer people went to the party than we expected.
3. Although I have fewer GCSEs than you, I have more common sense.
4. I have less time than I thought.
5. We have less than four months before our exams.
6. The fewer mistakes I make, the better my SPaG mark!
7. I need to drink less coffee.
8. However, I drink fewer cups of coffee than you!
9. More time, less haste!
10. I was standing less than one metre away from the tiger.

Fascinating Fact!

In 2008, a major supermarket chain in the UK received so many complaints about the bad grammar on its fast-track checkout notices (*10 items or less*) that it took them all down! Even though *10 items or fewer* is grammatically correct, they didn't like the sound of it, so they replaced their signs with ones saying *Up to 10 items*.

b. AMOUNT OF/NUMBER OF

Read the following sentences. Using your knowledge of nouns, can you work out the rules for when we use *an amount of* and *a number of*?

*You need a certain **amount of** commitment to finish this.*

*I have a **number of** great ideas!*

*Some fizzy drinks contain a large **amount of** sugar.*

*We have a **number of** facts to learn.*

Check your answer on the next page.

Answer:

Amount is with uncountable nouns

Number is also with countable plural nouns

Is Number Singular or Plural?

When *number* means *some*, it takes the plural verb. For example:

A number of students are waiting for their exam results.

When you use *the number*, it takes the singular verb. For example:

The number of students increases every year.

Test Yourself!

Put *amount* or *number* in the spaces below. If the answer is *number*, explain why the verb is singular or plural.

1. I have a huge _____ of homework to do!
2. Why don't I want to go out with you? Well, there are a _____ of reasons...
3. There are a _____ of cute rabbits in that cage.
4. She had the right _____ of relevant experience for the job.
5. We are worried by the _____ of violence in the city centre.
6. A _____ of people want a change of government.
7. The _____ of unemployed teenagers is rising.
8. Teachers believe that a certain _____ of homework every evening is good for you.
9. Romeo and Juliet had a great _____ of love for each other.
10. The _____ of excellent SPaG marks is increasing.

Check your answers on the next page.

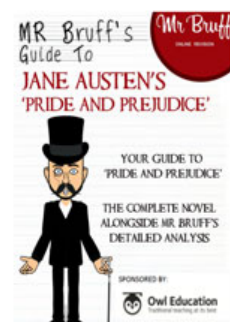
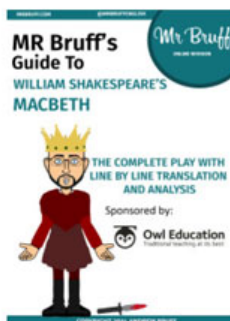
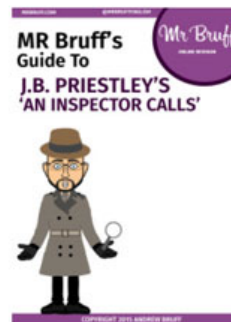
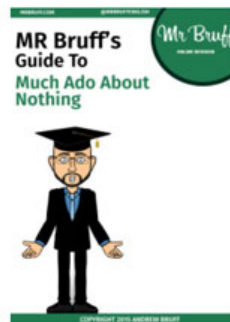
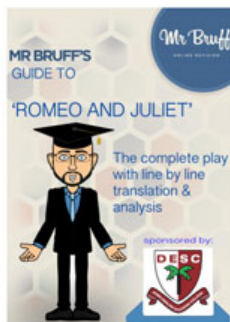
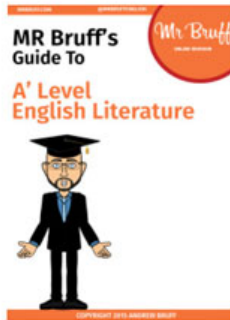
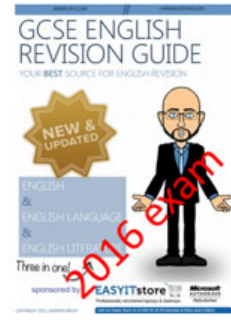
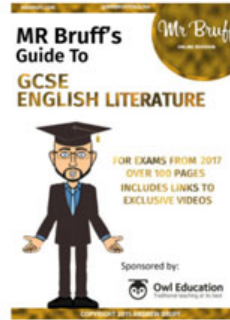
Answers and Explanations

1. I have a huge amount of homework to do! ('Homework' is an uncountable noun.)
2. Why don't I want to go out with you? Well, there are a number of reasons... ('a number of' = 'some' + countable reasons)
3. There are a number of cute rabbits in that cage. ('a number of' = 'some' + countable rabbits)
4. She had the right amount of relevant experience for the job. ('Experience' is an uncountable noun.)
5. We are worried by the amount of violence in the city centre. ('Violence' is an uncountable noun.)
6. A number of people want a change of government. ('a number of' = 'some' + countable people.)
7. The number of unemployed teenagers is rising. ('The number + singular verb + countable teenagers)
8. Teachers believe that a certain amount of homework every evening is good for you. (Unsurprisingly, 'homework' is an uncountable noun.)
9. Romeo and Juliet had a great amount of love for each other. ('love' is an uncountable noun. Many poets have written about how it cannot be measured.)
10. The number of excellent SPaG marks is increasing. ('The number + singular verb + countable SPaG marks.)

What Next?

Here's a creative challenge for you. Collective nouns can be great fun: can you invent a new one? If so, send it to @Mrs_SPaG and I'll tweet the ones I like the best! Yay!

Yay! is an interjection and *the* is a determiner. I'm sure you can guess the topic of the next chapter...



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