

Plurals: Changing a Word's Status

We all know that a singular word can become a plural word. Sometimes the change is simple:

1. Adding "s" to the singular word:
House → houses
Shoe → shoes
2. Capital letters and abbreviations with capital letters add "s":
X → Xs
HMO → HMOs
CD → CDs
3. Numbers are pluralized by adding "s":
1800 → 1800s
'80 → '80s

Other times the change requires something more:

1. If the singular ends in *s*, *x*, *ch*, *sh*, or *z*, add "es":
Miss → misses
mix → mixes
church → churches
hush → hushes
buzz → buzzes
2. If the singular ends in *y*, drop the *y* and add "ies":
Ready → readies
Energy → energies
3. If the singular ends in a *vowel + o*, add "s":
Patio → patios
Hello → hellos
4. If the singular ends in a *consonant + o*, add either "s" or "es":
Tomato → tomatoes
cargo → cargos
5. If the singular ends in *f*, *fe*, or *ff*, add "s" OR drop the *f* or *fe* and add "ves":
Sheriff → sheriffs
Shelf → shelves
Life → lives
6. Some words have irregular plurals and either the letters change within the word, or it adds "en" or "ren":

Woman→women

Child→children

Goose→geese

7. With hyphenated or spaced compound words, pluralize the main word:

Brother-in-law→brothers-in-law (main word is *brother*)

Attorney at law→attorneys at law (main word is *attorney*)

As you can see, there aren't many rules about pluralizing words, but they're important rules nonetheless. If you're still not sure about the spelling, look the word up in the dictionary!