

One Cat, Two Cats: When to Add -s or -es

Key points

- Singular means one and plural means more than one: one cat becomes two cats.
- For regular plurals like these, add -s when the ending sounds like 's' or 'z': cat → cats and dog → dogs.
- Add -es when the ending sounds like 'iz' and adds an extra syllable, or spoken beat: bus → buses and wish → wishes.
- These patterns are a starting point, as some plurals have different spellings.
- The Department for Education's English programme includes adding -s and -es in Year 1, but schools can vary when they teach it, so ask your child's teacher what fits their current learning.

Things to try at home

- During play, show one toy cat and then two, saying 'one cat, two cats', and invite your child to join in if they wish.
- Make picture cards labelled cats, dogs, buses and wishes, then sort them together into an -s pile and an -es pile.
- Say 'bus, buses' and 'wish, wishes' together and gently tap the spoken beats to notice the extra beat.
- When sharing a book, notice one animal or several and say the matching words together, keeping it brief and stopping when your child has had enough.
- Let your child point, move cards, listen or speak in a language used at home while you model the English words, and ask their teacher about adaptations for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Find out more

- Department for Education: [English programmes of study — Year 1 spelling and school curriculum flexibility] (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study>).
- Department for Education: [English Appendix 1: Spelling — adding -s and -es, page 3] (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239784/English_Appendix_1_-_Spelling.pdf), the source for the sound patterns used here.
- Your child's teacher: ask which words the class is using and how to make a short, playful activity suit your child.