

# PLURAL IN COMPOUND NOUNS

# 1. As a rule in compounds the second component takes the plural:

## SINGULAR

- *housewife*
- *tooth-brush*
- *boy-scout*
- *maid-servant*

## PLURAL

- *housewives*
- *tooth-brushes*
- *boy-scouts*
- *maid-servants*

# Compounds in -ful :

## SINGULAR

- *handful*
- *spoonful*
- *mouthful*

## PLURAL

- *handful* or *handfuls*
- *spoonful* or *spoonfuls*
- *mouthful* or *mouthfuls*

man or woman, the first  
component = plurals in both  
components:

SINGULAR

PLURAL

- *man-servant*
- *woman-doctor*
- *gentleman-farmer*
- *men-servants*
- *women-doctors*
- *gentlemen-farmers.*

# In compounds where the preposition is a linking element only the first noun takes the plural form:

## SINGULAR

- *editor-in-chief*
- *mother-in-law*
- *commander-in-chief*
- *coat-of-mail*
- *man-of-war*

## PLURAL

- *editor**s**-in-chief*
- *mother**s**-in-law*
- *commander**s**-in-chief*
- *coat**s**-of-mail*
- *men**s**-of-war*

**with a conjunction as a linking  
element the plural is taken by  
the second noun:**

*gin-and-t  
onic*

*gin-and-t  
onics*

**noun + preposition/adverb/  
adjective = the first element+S:**

**SINGULAR**

- *passer-by*
- *looker-on*
- *court-martial*
- *attorney-general*

**PLURAL**

- *passers-by*
- *lookers-on*
- *courts-martial*
- *attorneys-general*

# No noun in a compound = the last element + s:

## SINGULAR

- *forget-me-not*
- *breakdown*
- *stand-by*
- *grown-up*
- *close-up*
- *pick-up*
- *drop-out*
- *go-between*

## PLURAL

- *forget-me-nots*
- *breakdowns*
- *stand-bys*
- *grown-ups*
- *close-ups*
- *pick-ups*
- *drop-outs*
- *go-betweens*