

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

- *man-servant*
- *woman-doctor*
- *gentleman-farmer*

PLURAL

- *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-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*