

SKILL 41: RECOGNIZE IRREGULAR PLURALS OF NOUNS

Many nouns in English have irregular plurals, and these irregular forms can cause confusion in written expression questions on the TOEFL test. The irregular forms that are the most problematic are plural forms that do not end in *s*.

Different *criteria* was* used to evaluate the performers.

In this example the plural noun *criteria* looks singular because it does not end in *s*; you might incorrectly assume that it is singular because there is no final *s*. However, *criteria* is a plural noun, so the singular verb *was used* is incorrect. The verb should be the plural form *were used*.

The following chart lists the irregular plurals that you should become familiar with:

IRREGULAR PLURALS			
Vowel change	<i>man / men</i> <i>woman / women</i>	<i>foot / feet</i> <i>tooth / teeth</i>	<i>goose / geese</i> <i>mouse / mice</i>
Add -EN	<i>child / children</i>	<i>ox / oxen</i>	
Same as singular	<i>deer / deer</i> <i>fish / fish</i>	<i>salmon / salmon</i> <i>sheep / sheep</i>	<i>trout / trout</i>
-IS → -ES	<i>analysis / analyses</i> <i>axis / axes</i> <i>crisis / crises</i>	<i>diagnosis / diagnoses</i> <i>hypothesis / hypotheses</i> <i>parenthesis / parentheses</i>	<i>synthesis / syntheses</i> <i>thesis / theses</i>
Ends in -A	<i>bacterium / bacteria</i> <i>curriculum / curricula</i>	<i>datum / data</i> <i>phenomenon / phenomena</i>	<i>criterion / criteria</i>
-US → -I	<i>alumnus / alumni</i> <i>bacillus / bacilli</i> <i>cactus / cacti</i>	<i>fungus / fungi</i> <i>nucleus / nuclei</i> <i>radius / radii</i>	<i>stimulus / stimuli</i> <i>syllabus / syllabi</i>

NOTE: Additional exercises to practice these irregular plurals of nouns appear in Appendix H at the back of the text. You may want to complete these exercises before you begin Exercise 41.

EXERCISE 41: Each of the following sentences contains at least one noun with an irregular plural. Circle the nouns with irregular plurals. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- I 1. (Parentheses) is needed around that expression.
- C 2. He wants to go on a fishing trip this weekend because he has heard that the (fish) are running.
3. The syllabi for the courses is included in the packet of materials.
4. The diagnosis that he heard today were not very positive.

- _____ 5. The crisis is not going to be resolved until some of the pressure is relieved.
- _____ 6. All of the alumni are attending the reception at the president's house.
- _____ 7. A flock of geese were seen heading south for the winter.
- _____ 8. The teeth in the back of his mouth needs to be capped.
- _____ 9. The fungi has spread throughout the garden.
- _____ 10. The sheepdog is chasing after the sheep which are heading over the hill.

SKILL 42: DISTINGUISH THE PERSON FROM THE THING

Nouns in English can refer to persons or things. Sometimes in written expression questions on the TOEFL test the person is used in place of the thing, or the thing is used in place of the person.

Ralph Nader is an *authorization** in the field of consumer affairs.

There are many job opportunities in *accountant**.

In the first example, *authorization* is incorrect because *authorization* is a thing and Ralph Nader is a person. The person *authority* should be used in this sentence. In the second example, *accountant* is incorrect because *accountant* is a person and the field in which an accountant works is *accounting*. The thing *accounting* should be used in this sentence.

The following chart outlines what you should remember about the person or thing:

PERSON OR THING
It is common to confuse a person with a thing in written expression questions on the TOEFL test.

EXERCISE 42: Some of the following sentences contain incorrectly used *persons* or *things*. Circle the incorrectly used words. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- I 1. In the evening he relaxes in front of the fire and writes long (poets).
- C 2. Service in the restaurant was slow because one cook had called in sick.
- _____ 3. The sculpture worked from sunrise until sunset on his new project.
- _____ 4. She has received several awards for her research in engineer.
- _____ 5. The economist's radical views were printed in a column in the Sunday newspaper.
- _____ 6. You must have remarkable looks to work as a model for *Vogue*.
- _____ 7. He had several critics to offer about the new play.