

Plurals

The Nominative plural of nouns in Gaelic is generally made one of two ways - **slenderization** (masculine nouns only) or by **adding a suffix**. There is no rule that guides us on which to use.

The plural **article** for the Nominative and Dative cases is “na” and prefixes “h-” before vowel initial words. In the **Genitive**, the article is “nan” or “nam.” For more on the Genitive plural, see the **handout on the Genitive**.

Slenderization

As you know by now, slenderization is the process of inserting an ‘i’ after the last broad vowel in a word. Sometimes in order to do this, for example when the last broad vowel is paired with another vowel, it is necessary to change a combination of vowels (see bòrd, below, as an example). These vowel changes can be confusing at first, but they occur regularly, and you get used to them after a while.

am bodach	na bodaich
an cat	na cait
am boireannach	na boireannaich
am bòrd	na bùird
an each	na h-eich

Using a Suffix

There are several different suffixes that you will find added to nouns to make plurals. Probably the most common is -an or -ean, following the spelling rule.

a’ chraobh	na craobhan
a’ choille	na coilltean
an car	na càraichean
an dealbh	na dealbhannan (this is one of the ones that removes a center vowel syllable)
an ubh	na uighean

A note regarding people: You may see occupations with fear- or bean- prefixed. Frequently, fear- and bean- are replaced with neach-, which is a gender neutral term for person. The plural of neach- is luchd-.

Sources and Further Reading

Black, Ronald, Cothrom Ionnsachaidh, University of Edinburgh, 1997, pp. 91-94.

Blacklaw, Bill, Bun-Chursa Gàidhlig, Oilthigh Glaschu, 1991, pp. 43-47.

Byrne, Michel, Gràmar na Gàidhlig, Stòrlann-Acair, 2004, pp. 39-42.

Christie, Emma, Ceumannan 1, Stòrlann, 2009, pp. 98, 231-234, 261-288, 350-351.

Fisher, Muriel, Scottish Gaelic Level 1, 3rd Ed., 2012, pp. 11-12.

Ó Maolalaigh, Roibeard & Iain MacAonghuis, Scottish Gaelic in Twelve Weeks, Birlinn Limited, 2011, pp. 106-109.

Spadaro, Katherine M. and Katie Graham, Colloquial Scottish Gaelic, Routledge, 2001, p. 51, 108.

Speaking Our Language Series 2, Cànan, 1993, p. 110.

Watson, Moray, Progressive Gaelic 1, Follais Books, 2012, pp. 73-76.

Nòta dhomhsa: ACI03/4-07,-08; ACI05-03; ACI08-04; ACI09-01; ACI11-02