

All about Esperanto nouns

You've probably heard of the international language Esperanto. About two million people speak it! And *you* can learn Esperanto around *four times faster* than other languages! To demonstrate this, here's how nouns work in Esperanto. Other grammar rules will be similarly simple.

Let's start with a quick grammar review. **Nouns** are words for people, places, ideas, and things. For example, **dog, ocean, tree, country, goose, sheep** are nouns.

In Esperanto, every noun ends with the letter **o**: dog, ocean, tree, country, goose, sheep become **hundo, oceano, arbo, lando, ansero, ŝafo** (pronounced “*shah-foh*”). Period.

In English, we make a noun plural by adding an **s** to the word: **dogs, oceans, trees**. Except words ending in **y** have the **y** changed to **ies** (country/**countries**). Except if the letter before the **y** is a vowel (boy/**boys**). Except for goose: the plural is **geese**. And one sheep two **sheep**. And there are more exceptions, like words borrowed from other languages.

To make Esperanto nouns plural, you just add a **j** (pronounced like an English “y”): **hundoj, oceanoj, arboj, landoj, anseroj, ŝafoj** (pronounced “*shah-foy*”). Always. No exceptions. End of rules for plurals.

Also, in an English sentence, you know who is doing the action (the *subject*) and who it is getting done to (the *object*) from the order of the words:

The dog chases the cat.

The dog is chasing, the cat is getting chased. You know that because the dog is before the verb and the cat is after the verb. (Obviously it gets complicated quickly, but that's the basic rule.)

An Esperanto sentence shows who the action is getting done to (the direct object) with an extra ending, the letter **n**. So these sentences all mean exactly the same thing: **The dog chases the cat:**

La hundo ĉasas la katon.

La katon ĉasas la hundo.

Ĉasas la hundo la katon.

La katon la hundo ĉasas. (Ktp.)

The dog chases the cat.

The dog chases the cat.

The dog chases the cat.

The dog chases the cat. (Etc.)

(Note: **hundo** is similar to the English word hound. **ĉ** is like English **ch**, so “*chah-sahss*.”)

In all of those sentences, we know that the cat is getting chased, because **katon** ends with the **n** object ending.

This is useful for people who use languages where the word order is different from English, or which also mark the nouns: they can use their usual word order and all Esperantists will understand them. In practice, many Esperantists use the English word order (with the correct endings!) anyway.

But... what happens if your word is *both* plural *and* an object? Easy! You just add *both* the **j** and the **n** so the noun ends with **-ojn** (rhymes with JOIN). **The dogs chase the cats:**

La hundo j ĉasas la kato jn .	The dogs chase the cats.
La kato jn ĉasas la hundo j .	The dogs chase the cats.
Ĉasas la hundo j la kato jn .	The dogs chase the cats.
La kato jn la hundo j ĉasas. (Ktp.)	The dogs chase the cats. (Etc.)

So:

	Singular	Plural
Subject	-O ("oh")	-OJ ("oy")
Object	-ON ("own")	-OJN ("oy'n")

(Note that, in English, the verb has to change from "chases" to "chase" when we have plural dogs. It's almost like we're moving the "s" from the verb to the subject! (But... *only in the present tense*.) In Esperanto, the verb stays exactly the same.)

And, unlike French, Spanish, German, or Italian (but like English), nouns don't have a gender. One less thing to memorize for every noun.

That's nouns in Esperanto. That's everything. No exceptions. Enjoy!

Hmmm... maybe we can sneak **adjectives** in here too: words that modify nouns (big, hungry, gray). In English, these do not change for number or use, they're always the same (one big hungry gray dog or six big hungry gray dogs). In Esperanto, adjectives work just like nouns except using **a** instead of **o** for the endings (**-a**, **-an**, **-aj**, **-ajn**, pronounced "-ah", "-ahn", "-eye", "-ine"). And they have to match their nouns: **La grandaj hundoj ĉasas la grizajn katojn**. And you can put them after their nouns, but like English, they're usually before. **La fino** (the end)!

An excellent intro to Esperanto grammar is www.youtube.com/@AmericanEsperantist. Other good sites are lernu.net and duolingo.com.

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