

FUNNY PLURALS

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"Humor" has been defined as the sudden occurrence of the unexpected. A funny (humorous) plural, it follows by logic, is a plural that ends with an unexpected letter. Since most plurals in English are formed by adding an S to the singular, plurals that end with other letters are funny (strange).

Several lists of funny plurals ending with each letter of the alphabet have been previously published in *Word Ways* (Dave Silverman's *Kickshaws* (The Plural Project) in August 1970, Ralph Beaman's "Pluralities" in November 1970 and February 1971 with addenda in February 1972 and May 1982 *Colloquy*). However, such lists usually contain a plurality of collective nouns (nouns where the plural is the same as the singular, like FISH). These are the analogues of puns. Equally pun-like are plurals of hyphenated words where a nonterminal part of the word is pluralized (like MOTHERS-IN-LAW). Funnier are plurals that differ from the singular due to the change of internal letters (like MEN). The funniest plurals are formed by adding a letter other than S to the end of the word. These words are derived from languages other than English that use sounds other than S to indicate plurality.

Thus, we have a logical challenge: what is the funniest list of plurals we can find? Below is a list of funny plurals, scored from 0 to 3 with 0 being funniest:

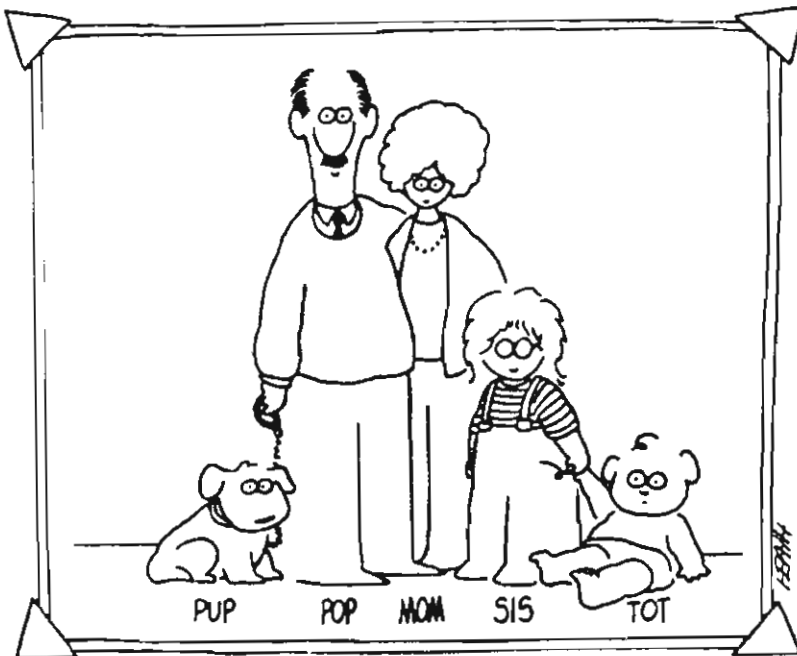
- 0 = plural formed (basically) by adding a letter
- 1 = plural spelled differently from singular
- 2 = plural spelled differently from singular, and contains punctuation
- 3 = plural spelled the same as the singular

All entries are from Merriam-Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary, except those marked N13, which are from the Third International; entries in brackets are probable dictionary artifacts. Can readers improve on this list?

- A vas vasa 0
- B Slubbi Sleyb (N13) 1
- C calpulli calpullec (N13) 0
- D grant-in-aid grants-in-aid 2
- E ala alae 0
- F sharif ashraf (N13) 1
- G aire airig (N13) 0

H lira liroth 0
 I ban bani 0
 J Kharijite Khawarij (N13) 1
 K puli pulik 0
 L armfu armsfu 1
 M goy goyim 0
 N krone kronen 0
 O derring-do derrings-do (N13) 2
 [Meo Miao (N13) 1, Mixteca Mixteco (N13) 1, papiopio papio
 (N13) 1, Sumu Sumo (N13) 1]
 P aide-de-camp, aides-de-camp 2
 Q Qaraqalpaq Qaraqalpaq (N13) 3
 R krone kroner 0
 S a as 0
 T matzo matzot 0
 U haler haleru 0
 V Tiv Tiv (N13) 3
 W son-in-law sons-in-law 2
 [Kwapa Quapaw (N13) 1]
 X eau eaux 0
 Y grosz groszy 0
 Z hertz hertz 3

Another way a plural could be funny is by pluralizing in the exact opposite way one expects: that is, by dropping a terminal S instead of adding one. Can the reader think of a word that does this (see Answers and Solutions)?



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