

## Word-classes in English for Political Studies

### Features of Nouns in E4PS

- ✧ **noun or name?** (see the handout 1, “Notes on Nouns in EPS”)
- ✧ **countable and/or uncountable**
- ✧ **collective nouns<sup>1</sup>** (see the handout 1, “Notes on Nouns in EPS”)
- ✧ **no gender distinction<sup>2</sup>, but pay attention to some particular cases – in zoology in particular – where such a feature acquires relevance from a lexical point of view** [such as cat (common name), tom (male cat), queen (female cat), queening (act of parturition), kitten (young cat); horse (common name), stallion (male horse), mare (female horse), foaling (act of parturition), foal (young horse, either sex); colt (young male horse), filly (young female horse); rabbit (common name), buck (male rabbit), doe (female rabbit), kindling (act of parturition), bunny (young rabbit)]
- ✧ **personal nouns/general nouns (e.g.: politician/politics, economist, economy)**
- ✧ **compound nouns (e.g.: travel agency, unemployment rate)**
- ✧ **collocations (e.g.: goods and services, supply and demand)**
- ✧ **false friends (e.g.: library, facilities)**

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<sup>1</sup> Specifically, note that American English and other varieties of English differ in the way they handle collective nouns: these are nouns like ‘family,’ ‘team,’ ‘government’, etc. that refer to a group rather than to an individual. Because they do not show a plural ending, American English typically considers collective nouns as singular nouns; because they refer to a group, however, British English considers them as plural nouns. The following sentence, where ‘team’ is considered a singular noun (since the verb ‘is exploring’ is singular),

*The team is exploring both the starter and bullpen markets.*

is more typical of American English. By contrast, the following sentence, where ‘team’ is considered a plural noun (since the verb ‘have generated’ is plural),

*The team have generated a high-quality draft.*

is more typical of British English, though it also appears in American English, albeit less frequently.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the suffix -ess in few names of occupations such as *actress, hostess, manageress, waitress* shows that the person doing the job is a woman. Many people now avoid these. Instead, you can use *actor* or *host* (although *actress* and *hostess* are still very common), or a neutral word, such as *server* for *waiter* and *waitress*. Neutral words like *assistant, worker, person* or *officer* are now often used instead of *-man* or *-woman* in the names of jobs. For example, you can use *police officer* instead of *policeman* or *policewoman*, *spokesperson* instead of *spokesman* or *spokeswoman*, *businessperson* instead of *businessman* or *businesswoman*. Neutral words are very common in newspapers, on television and radio and in official writing, in both *British English* and *North American English*. Also, the gender-neutral honorific *Mx* has been added to common gendered honorifics, such as *Mr* and *Ms*, as a title for those who do not identify as being of a particular gender, or for people who simply don't want to be identified by gender.

## Main features of Countable Nouns [C]

✧ they form standard plural with the ending **-(e)s** BUT remember:

- ◆ a set of nouns ending in **-s, -x, -ch, -sh, -o, or -z** where the ending **-es** is added for euphonic reasons: e.g. *class* → *classes*; *fax* → *faxes*; *watch* → *watches*; *clash* → *clashes*; *hero* → *heroes*; *buzz* → *buzzes*;
- ◆ a set of nouns where the final consonant is followed by **-y**, a double spelling adaptation occurs – both in the final “y” of the word changing into “i” and in the ending itself where a euphonic “e” goes before final “s”: *company* → *companies*; *delivery* → *deliveries*; *party* → *parties*. However, such adaptation does not occur when a vowel is in front of the final -y: *boy* → *boys*; *day* → *days*;
- ◆ a small group of lexical items with a double spelling adaptation – both in the final “f” of the word changing into “v” and in the ending itself where a euphonic “e” goes before final “s” (e.g. *knife* → *knives*; *life* → *lives*; *shelf* → *shelves*). However, such adaptation is not a permanent feature: in fact, pay attention to *chief* → *chiefs*, *cliff* → *cliffs*; *roof* → *roofs*;
- ◆ a set of nouns of **classical (Greek or Latin) origin** maintaining a classical plural formation, sometimes together with a standard plural formation in -s (e.g. *criterion* → *criteria*; *formula* → *formulae / formulas*; *memorandum* → *memoranda / memorandums*; *millennium* → *millennia*; *referendum* → *referenda / referendums*; *stimulus* → *stimuli*);
- ◆ a set of nouns of **classical origin ending in -x** such as *appendix*, *index*, *matrix* with a double chance of plural formation: respectively, *appendices* and *appendixes*; *indices* and *indexes*; *matrices* and *matrixes*.
- ◆ a set of nouns ending in **-sis** such as *analysis*, *basis*, *crisis*, *thesis* whose plural forms are respectively *analyses*, *bases*, *crises*, and *theses*;
- ◆ a small group of nouns maintaining a **Germanic plural formation** (e.g. *child* → *children*; *goose* → *geese*; *foot* → *feet*; *louse* → *lice*<sup>3</sup>; *man* → *men*; *mouse* → *mice*<sup>4</sup>; *ox* → *oxen*; *tooth* → *teeth*; *woman* → *women*);
- ◆ a set of countable nouns which **only occur in the plural** and generally take a plural verb: e.g. *amenities*, *clothes*, *earnings*, *facilities*, *glasses*, *goods*, *headquarters*, *outskirts*, *overheads*, *premises*, *savings*, *trousers*, *valuables*, *works*.

<sup>3</sup> The plural form *louses* can be used to refer to very unpleasant people.

<sup>4</sup> The plural form can be *mouses* only when referring to the small device used to control the movement of the cursor on a computer screen.