

## Chapter 2 – Nouns, Gender and Plural

This lesson will help you form the plural in Urdu. Before we get started, I have some good and some not so good news for you. The good news is that there are a few simple rules and most words follow them. The not so good news is that there are plenty of exceptions or extra rules. This applies especially for words that have Arabic or Persian origin. If you are just started with learning Urdu, I encourage you to just focus on the main rules for now. Don't get frustrated with the endless exception but leave them for some later time.

### Part 1

#### Nouns and Gender

First, you need to understand the concept of "grammatical gender". In Urdu, each noun has a specific grammatical gender assigned to it: either masculine (m.) or feminine (f.). If your native language is English, this concept might be strange and very new for you. If this is you, check out [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammatical\\_gender](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammatical_gender) for more information.

You will need to know and memorize the gender of each word in noun. Mastering this will be a life-long journey. Some nouns are marked, e.g. you can tell from the ending what gender it is. Some nouns are not (unmarked).

#### Marked nouns

Nouns ending in -a ( ا or ے ) or -aya ( ے ) are masculine:

Boy	<i>Larka</i>	لڑکا
(male) child	<i>Bacha</i>	بچہ
Rupee/money	<i>rupaya</i>	روپیہ

Similarly, nouns ending in -i ( ی ) or -iya ( یا ) are feminine:

Girl	<i>Larki</i>	لڑکی
bird	<i>chiriya</i>	چڑیا

#### Unmarked nouns

Any nouns that do not have the above endings are called "unmarked" and – here comes the difficult news again – you simply have to memorize their gender. Here are some examples:

House	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Ghar</i>	گھر
Book	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Kitab</i>	کتاب
work	<i>masculine</i>	<i>Kam</i>	کام

One important note: there are some words that look like they are marked, but they are not. That means, some words ending in -a are not masculine, but feminine. And some ending in -i are not

feminine, but masculine. Again, these words you will simply have to memorize. Here are some examples:

Water	<i>masculine</i>	<i>Pani</i>	پانی
Wind	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Hava</i>	ہوا
place	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Jaga</i>	جگہ

Lastly, Arabic or Persian loanwords have some common ending that give you hints about the grammatical gender. More on that later.

Now that you are clear on grammatical gender, we are all set to look at how to make plurals in our next session.

## Making Plurals in Urdu – Part 2

As I mentioned in the last blog post, you need to first understand grammatical gender in order to make plurals in Urdu.

There are some simple rules for making plurals for the different noun categories:

Male (marked): delete the last “a” ا and replace it with “e” ے

Female (marked): add “a” and nasalization ان

Male (unmarked): no changes

Female (unmarked): add “i” and nasalization یں

Let’s look at some examples to make it clear.

### Marked nouns (Male)

<i>Larke</i>	لڑکے	<i>Larka</i>	لڑکا
<i>bache</i>	بچے	<i>Bacha</i>	بچہ

### Marked nouns (Female)

<i>Larkiyān</i>	لڑکیاں	<i>Larki</i>	لڑکی
<i>kursiyān</i>	کرسیاں	<i>Kursi</i>	کرسی

### Unmarked nouns

Houses	<i>Ghar</i>	گھر	House	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Ghar</i>	گھر
Medicines	<i>Davain</i>	دوائیں	medicine	<i>feminine</i>	<i>dava</i>	دوا
books	<i>kitab</i>	کتابیں	Book	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Kitab</i>	کتاب

### Some special cases

- 1) Just like in most languages, there are a lot of uncountable words or words which don't have plurals. E.g. work, time, water, sugar etc. This is also true in Urdu.
- 2) Sometimes there are some spelling differences based on what the words end in. I won't go into that in details. Just a quick note that don't be surprised if some spellings don't quite follow the rules.
- 3) Some Arabic and Persian loanwords have special plurals, i.e. they take Arabic plural endings. Some Arabic loanwords have both Arabic and Urdu plural. Generally, the Urdu form is used in spoken and more informal settings, and the Arabic form in written or literary contexts. Here are some examples:

Situation → circumstances	حالات	حال
Paper → papers	کاغذات	کاغذ
Forest → forests	جنگلات	جنگل
Order → orders	آحکام	حکم
Teacher → teachers	or اساتذہ استاد	استاد

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