

The pronunciation of the S in plurals, 3rd person singular verbs or genitive Saxon

The pronunciation of the final S in plural words and verbs in the third person singular depends on the final consonant sound before that S.

The ending is pronounced /s/ after a voiceless sound, it is pronounced /z/ after a voiced sound and is pronounced /ɪz/ after a sibilant sound:

- Voiceless: helps /ps/ – sits /ts/ – looks /ks/
- Voiced: crabs /bz/ – words /dz/ – gloves /vz/,
- Sibilant: buses /sɪz/ – bridges /dʒɪz/ or wishes /ʃɪz/

1. The /ɪz/ sound

If the last consonant sound of the word is a sibilant sound, the final S is pronounced as /ɪz/. This /ɪz/ sound is pronounced like an extra syllable.

Examples of words ending in the /ɪz/ sound:

- **-CE**: races (sounds like "race-iz"), embraces, places, convinces
- **-S / SE**: buses, gases, rises, pauses, nurses
- **-X**: fixes, mixes, boxes, taxes
- **-ZE**: amazes, freezes, prizes, quizzes, seizes
- **-SS**: kisses, misses, passes, bosses, glasses, dresses
- **-CH**: churches, sandwiches, witches, teaches, watches, reaches
- **-SH**: dishes, eyelashes, hairbrushes, wishes, pushes, crashes,
- **-GE**: garages, wages, changes, ages, judges, arranges, challenges

Remember: after verbs ending in -sh, -ch, -s, -ss and -x, we add the -es to the end of the verb (in third person) and the pronunciation is /ɪz/ as an extra syllable.

2. The /s/ sound

If the last consonant of the word is voiceless, then the S is pronounced as /s/.

NOTE: The consonants c, s, sh, ch and x are voiceless though they use the sibilants ending seen above. Examples of words ending in the /s/ sound:

- **-P/ PE**: cups, stops, sleeps, landscapes, types, telescopes
- **-T/ TE**: hats, students, hits, writes, graduates, institutes
- **-K/ KE**: cooks, books, drinks, walks, likes, snakes
- **-F**: cliffs, sniffs, beliefs, laughs, graphs, apostrophes (the -gh and -ph here are pronounced like an F)
- **-TH**: myths, tablecloths, months (voiceless th /θ/), baths, earths

3. The /z/ sound

If the last letter of the words ends in a voiced consonant (or sound), then the S is pronounced like a Z /z/ (without creating another syllable). This Z sound is similar to the sound a bee makes zzzz.

We also use this ending when the word ends in a vowel sound (e.g. bees, flies etc.)

Examples of words ending in the /z/ sound:

- **-B/ BE**: crabs, rubs, describes, tubes
- **-D/ DE**: cards, words, rides, ends
- **-G**: rugs, bags, begs
- **-L/ LE**: deals calls, falls, hills, crocodiles, styles,
- **-M/ ME**: plums, dreams, times, comes
- **-N/ NE**: fans, drains, runs, pens, hormones, stones

- **-NG**: kings, belongs, sings, meanings, things
- **-R/ RE**: wears, cures, fires, signatures, figures
- **-VE**: gloves, wives, shelves, drives
- **-Y**: plays, cries, buys, boys, factories, says

- **-THE**: clothes, bathes, breathes
- **-VOWEL SOUNDS**: sees, seas, toes, photos

Say the following words out aloud and then put them in the correct column according to the pronunciation of the sound of the plural or 3rd person singular "s":

Boys	damages	graduates	lessons	minutes	products
Cheques	earns	hates	lives	paints	sandwiches
Closes	faces	hours	loves	phrases	things
Cooks	girls	James's	messages	places	wants

/s/	/z/	/ɪz/