

PLURAL FORMATION (-LAR)

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

Plural formation in Turkish is created with the suffix -lAr. The vowel in the suffix changes according to vowel harmony, making it either -lar or -ler.

This structure is essential because plural forms appear in daily language, simple descriptions, and basic sentences at all levels.

1. The Plural Suffix: -lAr

Turkish uses a single plural marker with two possible forms:

- -lar
- -ler

The correct form depends on the last vowel of the word.

2. Vowel Harmony Rule

The last vowel of the noun determines which version of the suffix is used.

Back vowels → -lar

A, I, O, U → -lar

Examples:

- araba → arabalar (cars)
- kapı → kapılar (doors)
- çocuk → çocuklar (children)
- okul → okullar (schools)

Front vowels → -ler

E, İ, Ö, Ü → -ler

Examples:

- ev → evler (houses)
- şehir → şehirler (cities)
- göz → gözler (eyes)
- gül → güller (roses)

This rule applies to all nouns in Turkish.

3. No Gender, No Irregular Forms

Turkish plurals follow a regular pattern. There are no exceptions, no gender markers, and no irregular plural nouns.

- One rule
- Two forms
- 100% predictable

This makes plural formation one of the most consistent structures in Turkish.

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4. When Plurals Are Used

Plurals appear in many common contexts:

- Naming multiple objects
- Describing groups of people
- Expressing amounts with quantifiers
- Talking about general categories
- Items in lists or classifications

Examples:

- Kitaplar masada. (The books are on the table.)
- Arkadaşlar geliyor. (Friends are coming.)
- Kediler uyuyor. (The cats are sleeping.)
- Çiçekler güzel. (The flowers are beautiful.)

5. When Plurals Are Not Used

Turkish does not use the plural suffix in some cases where English does.

a) Numbers

When a number comes before the noun, the noun stays singular.

Examples:

- iki kitap (two books) — not iki kitaplar
- beş öğrenci (five students)
- on elma (ten apples)

b) Quantifiers

Words like çok, az, biraz, birkaç, birçok keep the noun singular.

Examples:

- çok insan (many people)
- birkaç arkadaş (a few friends)
- biraz çiçek (some flowers)

c) General statements

General truths often use singular nouns.

Examples:

- Kuş uçar. (A bird flies / Birds fly.)
- Balık yüzer. (Fish swim.)

6. Plurals + Possessives + Cases

The plural suffix appears before other suffixes:

Plural → Possessive → Case

Examples:

- evlerim (my houses)
- arkadaşlarımız (our friends)
- kitaplardan (from the books)
- çocuklarla (with the children)

This order stays consistent across all levels.

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Examples

- Arabalar yolda. (The cars are on the road.)
- Okullar açıldı. (Schools opened.)
- Kediler dışarıda oynuyor. (The cats are playing outside.)
- Evler çok eski. (The houses are very old.)
- Çocuklar bahçede. (The children are in the garden.)

Notes

- Plural suffix uses vowel harmony: -lar / -ler
- Nouns with front vowels → -ler
- Nouns with back vowels → -lar
- No irregular plural nouns in Turkish
- Numbers and quantifiers keep the noun singular
- Plural suffix comes before other suffixes