

Swahili 2

	SINGULAR	PLURAL		SINGULAR	PLURAL		
1	<i>racist</i>	mbaguzi	wabaguzi	16	<i>sprout</i>	mmea	mimea
2	<i>stranger</i>	mgeni	wageni	17	<i>tomato plant</i>	mñaña	miñaña
3	<i>communist</i>	mkomunisti	wakomunisti	18	<i>flame</i>	moto	mioto
4	<i>gossip (person)</i>	mlimi	walimi	19	<i>arrow</i>	mšale	mišale
5	<i>missionary</i>	mmisionari	wamisionari	20	<i>tree</i>	mti	miti
6	<i>auctioneer</i>	mnadi	wanadi	21	<i>prop</i>	mwegamo	miwegamo
7	<i>cook</i>	mpiši	wapiši	22	<i>hut</i>	kibanda	vibanda
8	<i>Swahili man</i>	mswahili	waswahili	23	<i>basket</i>	kikapu	vikapu
9	<i>child</i>	mtoto	watoto	24	<i>handle</i>	kipini	vipini
10	<i>person</i>	mtu	watu	25	<i>knife</i>	kisu	visu
11	<i>person to lean on</i>	mwegamo	wawegamo	26	<i>book</i>	kitabu	vitabu
12	<i>stick</i>	mbarango	mibarango	27	<i>stool</i>	kiti	viti
13	<i>coffee bush</i>	mbuni	mibuni	28	<i>infant</i>	kitoto	vitoto
14	<i>chain</i>	mkufu	mikufu	29	<i>thing</i>	kitu	vitu
15	<i>wild fig tree</i>	mkuyu	mikuyu				

Each Swahili noun is a member of a noun class or gender. The genders, unlike Western languages we are familiar with, are not sex-based. The singular form of each noun includes a prefix that identifies its gender. Nouns are pluralized by replacing this prefix with one that inflects the noun for the plural. Three genders are exemplified in the data above. Analyze the forms and answer the questions below.

1. Identify the prefixes for each gender:

gender	marks gender in singular:	plural replacement:	examples numbered:
1			
2			
3			

2. Consider the meanings of the nouns in each gender. Do they have anything in common? Can you suggest a name for each gender?

3. What evidence do you find that the singular prefixes do more than simply mark the singular--that they correlate with some additional semantic content?