

Lesson 6

In the last video, we discussed how we refer to one item --- the singular form. Here we'll talk about how we refer to two or more items of the same kind --- the plural form --- and also how we refer to a quantity of something, like "some sugar" or "some water".

Let's start with plurals. Using the example, "the book" in English, this becomes "the books" if there is more than one book. We've seen the singular in Guernsey French is "le livre". The plural turns out to be "les livres". So "the" becomes "les" and an "s" is added to the word itself, although this "s" is not pronounced. "Les" is used for both masculine and feminine words.

Let's look at some examples.

les pids (the feet) les solers (the shoes)

les qu'minsés (the shirts) les cottes (the coats)

les pailles (the shovels) les fourques (the forks [garden forks])

Notice that the final "s" on "les" is not really pronounced, but if the plural word starts with a vowel sound, then the "s" is pronounced:

les haommes (the men) les endrets (the rooms)

les hologies (the clocks) les epaules (the shoulders)

In fact, the "s" is so strongly pronounced, that it is probably better to think of it as a "z".

In the examples above there were a couple of cases where the English plural was irregular: the plural of "foot" is "feet" and of "man" is "men". There are obviously many more: fly, flies; thief, thieves, mouse, mice; tooth, teeth, and so on. Guernsey French also has some irregular plurals, and we'll discuss them at the end of the video.

Now what about the plural of "a" or "an"? This is "des", meaning "some". As for "les" it's used for both masculine and feminine words, and the "s" is again pronounced before a vowel sound.

Some examples are:

des cats (some cats) des tchians (some dogs)

des souoris (some mice) des lapins (some rabbits)

des hehets (some [garden] gates) des hougues (some mounds)

In the last two examples the "h" is not silent, so we say "des".

Some examples where the "h" is not silent or the word starts with a vowel are:

des assiaettes (some plates) des outis (some tools)

des hus (some doors) des aos (some bones)

In English we sometimes miss out the word "some". For instance, we can say "There are some apples on the table" or "There are apples on the table". We can't do this in Guernsey French: we need to include "des".

Now let's think about how we can refer to a unknown quantity of something, for example how do we say "some sugar", "some flour", "some meat" in Guernsey French? These are often found when we're talking about food, but we can also say "some sand", "some cement", and so on.

Here we're using "some" again, but the words themselves, like sugar, are singular. The Guernsey French forms in this case are "du" before a masculine word, "d'la" before a feminine word, "d'" before a singular word beginning with a vowel sound, and finally "des" which we've seen already for plurals.

Let's look at some examples:

d'la croime (some cream) du poin (some bread)

d'la viande (some meat) du chucre (some sugar)

d'la flleur (some flour) du sail (some salt)

d'la terre (some soil) du pevre (some pepper)

and now with words beginning with vowel sounds:

d'l'aer (some air) d'l'encre (some ink)

d'l'herbe (some grass) d'l'iaoue (some water)

CHAT ABOUT IRREGULAR PLURALS IN GUERNSEY FRENCH

We've mentioned that there are a large number of irregular plurals in English. What about in Guernsey French?

Let's first remember the rule for regular plurals: add "s" (which is not pronounced). Also if the word ends in "s", the plural is the same as the singular form.

There is a class of irregular plurals which consist of words which end in "e" or "te".

First those ending in "e". Examples are:

aen chape (a hat) des chapiaoux (some hats)

aen vesse (a dish) des vessiaoux (some dishes)

aen morce (a piece) des morciaoux (some pieces)

and then those ending in "te":

aen bate (a boat) des batchiaoux (some boats)

aen marte (a hammer) des martchiaoux (some hammers)

aen coute (a knife) des coutchiaoux (some knives)

The difference between these and the first set is that the "t" forms a "tch" sound in the middle of the word. Two other examples are

aen rate (a rake) des ratchiaoux (some rakes)

aen chate (a castle) des chatchiaoux (some castles)

There are also a few other irregular plurals worth noting:

aen ch'fa (a horse) des ch'faoux (some horses)

aen ieil (an eye) des 'siaers (some eyes)

aen halaeux (a draw) des haleur (some draws)

More could be said about plurals, but at this stage this is all that we need to know. However one final point is that even with the standard plurals where an "s" is added, a short vowel sound in the singular can be pronounced as a long vowel sound in the plural. For instance, native speakers say "aen cat", but "des cats". But this need not concern us here.

