

People or persons?

Q: I always tell my students : 1 person - 2 people , so there are 5 people
But I 've heard 5 persons , for ex. to say it's a car for 5 persons (is that right ?)

Francoise T., Brussels, Belgium

A: Hi Francoise, thanks for your query. This seems to be tricky for quite a few people, perhaps because in many languages the plural of person is often a similar-looking word. Also, you're right, both *people* and *persons* are used – though with a difference.

The most common plural of person is undoubtedly people.
However, in formal, official register in written English (signs, legal language, official documents etc) 'persons' is used.

But in everyday speech and writing, we always use 'people', so if I were you I'd go on teaching it as a very common irregular plural