s and es in plurals and third person verbs

Cubs Coats.
R Cubs Banks
OO WATCHES
M PENS
S Buses

Normally s and es are pronounced either /s/, /z/ or /ɪz/, depending upon the final sound of the root word.

They are pronounced /z/ after the following consonant sounds:

	Plural nouns		Third person verbs
/b/	cubs		Kate robs banks.
/v/	caves		He lives in Hove.
/ð/	clothes		She bathes her feet.
/d/	beds		He reads *The Times*.
/g/	eggs		She digs the garden.
/l/	hills		It fills the room.
/m/	rooms		He comes today.
/n/	pens		She learns French.
/ŋ/	rings		It brings the rain

/Z/

They are also pronounced /z/ after words ending in *any vowel sound*; for example:

	Plural nouns		Third person verbs
/aʊ/	potatoes		She goes jogging.
/eɪ/	days		He plays tennis.
/eə/	hairs		She wears black.

/Z/

s and es are pronounced /s/ after the following consonant sounds:

	Plural nouns		Third person verbs
/p/	cups		It escapes me.
/f/	cuffs		She laughs a lot.
/θ/	cloths		She baths the baby.
/t/	coats		It lights the room.
/k/	banks		It breaks the law.

/S/

They are pronounced /ɪz/ after the following consonant sounds.

	Plural nouns		Third person verbs
/s/	buses		He advises people.
/ʃ/	wishes		She fishes on Sunday.
/z/	roses		He often loses his temper.
/dʒ/	marriges		It encourages them.
/tʃ/	watches		She catches the ball.

/ɪZ/

PRACTICE

I   List the following words in the right group according to the pronunciation of s and es in plural or third person forms.

church add burn baby carpet beer cage break build leave face
garage fork dress kick hold door jet fox law make need pass
plant myth nose milk seagull pig night market meeting swim
ring start sell stamp wind voice suit week record thing stripe
programme tree train turn take talk rain wait proof smooth

Group 1: /ɪz/

_____

Group 2: /s/

_____

Group 3: /ɪz/

_____

It can be tricky to remember all the rules about pronouncing /s/ and /z/ sounds. Try reading the lines of these tables horizontally, making sure that the sounds in the /s/ column are all really different from the sounds in the /z/ column.

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/s/		/z/		/s/		/z/
dice	→	dies		place	→	plays
race	→	rays		loose	→	lose
fuss	→	fuzz		spice	→	spies
grace	→	greys		course	→	cause
ice	→	eyes		close (adj.)	→	close (verb)
this	→	these		cease	→	seize
recent	→	reason		niece	→	knees
dose	→	doze		pace	→	pays
face	→	phase		house (noun)	→	house (verb)

⚠️ Pronunciation may be connected to grammar: use /juːs/ = noun   use /juːz/ = verb
close /kləʊs/ = adjective   close /kləʊz/ = verb   house /haʊs/ = noun   house /haʊz/ = verb

4.3 (A17) Listen to the sentences. Look at the words in *italics*. Underline the words in *italics* which contain the sound /s/ and circle the ones which contain the sound /z/. Then listen again and repeat.

EXAMPLE   You can have my tent. It's no <u>use</u> to me. I never (use) it.

1 I'm not going to *advise* you. You never take my *advice*.
2 Your tooth is *loose*. You'll *lose* it if you're not careful.
3 The shop's very *close* to home, and it doesn't *close* till late.
4 I can't *excuse* people who drop litter. There's no *excuse* for it.

4.4 (A18) Listen and circle the word you hear. If you find any of these difficult, go to Section D *Sound pairs* for further practice.

1 Price or prize?   I got a good *price / prize* for that painting.
2 He sat or he's at?   I don't know where *he sat / he's at*.
3 Suit or shoot?   They didn't *suit / shoot* him.
4 Saved or shaved?   I've *saved / shaved* a lot in the past few days.
5 Sink or think?   We didn't *sink / think*.
6 Closed or clothed?   They were *closed / clothed* for the cold weather.

UNSTRESSED ENDINGS

-s (Plural of nouns, possessive case of nouns, and 3rd person singular present tense of verbs.)

(i) Pronounced [ɪz] after any of the following sounds: s z ʃ ʒ tʃ dʒ.

place	pleis	places	'pleisiz
cross	krɒs	crosses	'krɒsiz
circus	'sɜːkəs	circuses	'sɜːkəsiz
Alice	'ælis	Alice's	'ælisiz
rose	rouz	roses	'rouziz
please	pliːz	pleases	'pliːziz
James	dʒeimz	James's	'dʒeimziz
flourish	'flʌrɪʃ	flourishes	'flʌrɪʃiz
garage	'gærɑːʒ	garages	'gærɑːʒiz
fetch	fetʃ	fetches	'fetʃiz
manage	'mænidʒ	manages	'mænidʒiz
carriage	'kærɪdʒ	carriages	'kærɪdʒiz
George	dʒɔːdʒ	George's	'dʒɔːdʒiz

(ii) Pronounced [z] after a vowel or a voiced consonant (except z ʒ dʒ)

employ	im'plɔi	employs	im'plɔiz
country	'kʌntri	countries	'kʌntriz
know	nou	knows	nouz
reader	'riːdə	readers	'riːdəz
prefer	pri'fɜː	prefers	pri'fɜːz
colour	'kʌlə	colours	'kʌləz
name	neim	names	neimz
John	dʒɒn	John's	dʒɒnz
wave	weiv	waves	weivz
tell	tel	tells	telz
David	'deivid	David's	'deividz

(iii) Pronounced [s] after a voiceless consonant (except s ʃ tʃ)

cat	kæt	cats	kæts
take	teik	takes	teiks
laugh	lɑːf	laughs	lɑːfs
Edith	'iːdɪθ	Edith's	'iːdɪθs