**Word for Word**

**People or persons?**

Both *people* and *persons* are the plural of *person*. But which should be used?

*Persons* was once the preferred term when referring to multiple specific individuals, whereas *people* was used to refer only to an indefinite number of individuals.

**Examples**

- The guests of the dinner will include Lady Peachbeak, Sir Reginald Pear-Tarsus, and the Duke and Duchess du Plumfeather, all persons of esteemed position, fair breeding, and good appetite.
- Of all the people in fair Londontown, those four persons are most likely to drive the help to madness with their constant requests for additional figgy puddings and custard tarts.

*Persons* is now generally considered archaic, if not a little stuffy-sounding, except in very formalized situations such as legal writing. Nowadays, therefore, when talking or writing about more than one person, use *people*, not *persons*.

**Examples**

- Many people will be invited to the dinner, but only one or two people will actually attend.
• These two people probably won’t have anything better to do that night.

Bibliography


—Joe Munch

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