

Subject-Verb Agreement

from <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/599/01/>>

1. When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by *and*, use a plural verb.
 - She and her friends *are* at the fair.
 2. When two or more singular nouns or pronouns are connected by *or* or *nor*, use a singular verb.
 - The book or the pen *is* in the drawer.
 3. When a compound subject contains both a singular and a plural noun or pronoun joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is nearer the verb.
 - The boy or his friends *run* every day. • His friends or the boy *runs* every day.
 4. Do not be misled by a phrase that comes between the subject and the verb. The verb agrees with the subject, not with a noun or pronoun in the phrase.
 - The essay, including the footnotes, *is* boring. • One of the boxes *is* open
 - The man with the dogs *walks* down my street. • The people who listen to that music *are* few.
 5. The words *each*, *each one*, *either*, *neither*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *anybody*, *anyone*, *nobody*, *somebody*, *someone*, *no one*, *much*, and *many a* are singular and require a singular verb. The words *both*, *few*, *many*, *others*, and *several* always require a plural verb. *None* can be used with either a singular or a plural verb, but the plural is preferred.
 - Each of these hot dogs *is* juicy. • Many people *choose* to stay home.
 - Everybody *knows* Mr. Jones. • None of the reporters *were* able to
 - Many a person wants to improve conditions. interview the defendant.
- Note: Two compound indefinite pronouns joined by *and* require a singular verb.
- Anyone and everyone *is* considered innocent until proven guilty.
- Note: Compound subjects modified by *each*, *every*, or *many a* require a singular verb, but when *each* follows a plural subject, the verb is plural.
- Each manager and assistant manager *has* an idea to increase productivity.
 - They *each own* their own home.
6. Nouns such as *civics*, *mathematics*, *dollars*, *measles*, and *news* require singular verbs.
 - The news *is* on at six.
- Note: the word *dollars* is a special case. When talking about a total amount, the subject requires a singular verb, but when referring to a number of individual units, a plural verb is required.
- Dollars *are* often used instead of rubles in Russia. • Five dollars *is* a lot of money.
7. *All*, *any*, *more*, *most*, and *some* or fractional expressions (*one-half of*, *a part of*, *a majority of*) take either a singular or plural verb depending on the number of the noun following *of*.
 - Some of the book *lacks* suspense. • Some of the letters *were* not answered.
 8. A gerund (*-ing*), an infinitive, or a phrase acting as the subject of a sentence requires a singular verb.
 - Seeing *is* believing. • To know him *is* to love him.
 - Whoever votes for him *is* voting for a winner.
 9. The pronouns *who* and *that* can be either singular or plural, so it is necessary to find the number of the noun to which the *who* or *that* refers.
 - Michener *is* an author who *writes* epic novels.
 - He *is* one of the few people who *attend* the opera.
 10. Nouns such as *scissors*, *tweezers*, *trousers*, and *shears* require plural verbs.
 - These scissors *are* dull. • This pair of scissors *is* dull.
 11. In sentences beginning with *there is* or *there are*, the subject follows the verb.
 - There *are* many questions. • There *is* a question.
 12. When the parts of a subject refer to one entity, idea, or person, the subject requires a singular verb.
 - Turkey and Swiss cheese *is* my favorite sandwich.
 - The winner and new president *is* Joan Richardson.
 13. Collective nouns (*group*, *team*, *committee*, *class*, *family*) are words that imply more than one person and are considered singular by most Americans. (The British tend to use a plural verb with a collective noun.)

- The team *runs* during practice.
- The family *has* a long history.
- The committee *decides* how to proceed.
- My family *has* never been able to agree.

Subject-Verb Agreement Exercises

Select one answer from the choices provided.

1. Either the physicians in this hospital or the chief administrator (is/are) going to have to make a decision
2. (Is/Are) my boss or my sisters in the union going to win this grievance?
3. Some of the votes (seem/seems) to have been miscounted.
4. The tornadoes that tear through this county every spring (is/are) more than just a nuisance.
5. Everyone selected to serve on this jury (has/have) to be willing to give up a lot of time.
6. Kara Wolters, together with her teammates, (presents/present) a formidable opponent on the basketball court.
7. He seems to forget that there (is/are) things to be done before he can graduate.
8. There (has/have) to be some people left in that town after yesterday's flood.
9. Some of the grain (appears/appear) to be contaminated.
10. Three-quarters of the students (is/are) against the tuition hike.
11. Three-quarters of the student body (is/are) against the tuition hike.
12. A high percentage of the population (is/are) voting for the new school.
13. A high percentage of the people (is/are) voting for the new school.
14. George and Tamara (doesn't/don't) want to see that movie.
15. One of my sisters (is/are) going on a trip to France.
16. The man with all the birds (live/lives) on my street.
17. The movie, including all the previews, (take/takes) about two hours to watch.
18. The players, as well as the captain, (want/wants) to win.
19. Either answer (is/are) acceptable.
20. Every one of those books (is/are) fiction.
21. Nobody (know/knows) the trouble I've seen.
22. (Is/Are) the news on at five or six?
23. Mathematics (is/are) John's favorite subject, while Civics (is/are) Andrea's favorite subject.
24. Eight dollars (is/are) the price of a movie these days.
25. (Is/Are) the tweezers in this drawer?
26. Your pants (is/are) at the cleaner's.
27. There (was/were) fifteen candies in that bag. Now there (is/are) only one left!
28. The committee (debates/debate) these questions carefully.
29. The committee (leads/lead) very different lives in private.

30. All of the CDs, even the scratched one, (is/are) in this case.