

Subject-Verb Agreement

Introduction

1) The subject-verb agreement is the correspondence of a verb with its subject in person (first, second, or third) and number (singular or plural).

Liz is an accountant and she has a typical 8-5 job.

2) Subjects and verbs must agree with one another in person (first, second, or third). Note the subject-verb agreement rules of the verb *to be* in present tenses.

	Singular	Plural
1 st person	<i>I am</i>	<i>we are</i>
2 nd person	<i>you are</i>	<i>you are</i>
3 rd person	<i>he/she/it is</i>	<i>they are</i>

I am a student (1st person), my brother is a pupil (3rd person), and you are a teacher (2nd person).

Subjects and verbs must agree with one another in number (singular or plural). Thus, if a subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if a subject is plural, its verb must also be plural.

She cooks dinner, and her brothers make breakfast.

When the subject of the sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by the conjunction *and*, use a plural verb.

Brothers and sisters don't often get along.

The words *each*, *each one*, *either*, *neither*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *anyone*, *anybody*, *nobody*, *somebody*, *someone*, and *no one* are singular and require a singular verb.

Each of these suggestions is interesting.

Someone was standing at the door.

When two or more singular nouns or pronouns are connected by *or* or *nor*, use a singular verb.

Either your mother or dad needs to contact me.

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 closer to the verb (also called *the rule of proximity*).

The teacher or the students write homework on the board.

The students or the teacher writes homework on the board.

In sentences beginning with *there is* or *there are*, the subject follows the verb (also called *the inverted subject*). As *there* is not the subject, the verb agrees with what follows.

There is a book on the table.

There are books on the table.

Note the subject-verb agreement with words that indicate portions (e.g. *a lot*, *a majority*, *some*, *all*): if the noun after *of* is singular, use a singular verb; if it is plural, use a plural verb.

There is a lot of fuss around his arrival.

There are a lot of people in the room.

Use a singular verb with distances, periods of time, sums of money, etc., when considered as a unit.

Ten dollars is a high price to pay for socks.

But: Ten dollars (i.e. dollar bills) were scattered on the floor.

Collective nouns are words that imply more than one person but are considered singular and take a singular verb (e.g. *family*, *group*, *team*, *committee*, *class* etc.).

My family is very big.

Short Story Dialogue

- *There are a lot of people outside. Do you know what's going on?*
- *These people are protesting. Maybe you've heard the recent news that some company wants to build a huge factory right over there. And surely no one is happy about that.*
- *But I didn't see any media around.*
- *I'm sure that some reporters will come in a bit. It's not like there are a couple of people so it's difficult to ignore this.*

Independent Practice

1) Underline the correct word in the following sentences.

- a. The aim of the researches *was/were* to find life of Mars.
- b. The group *meet/meets* every other week.
- c. My cousins and my brother *don't/doesn't* know how to cook.
- d. Nobody *master/masters* a language without making mistakes.
- e. Neither Sarah nor I *am/are* going to college this year.
- f. I, as well as my friends, *am/are* excited about the upcoming trip to Vegas.
- g. The jury *has/have* finally reached a decision.
- h. Ten kilometers *is/are* too far to walk.
- i. *This/These* jeans *is/are* too revealing.
- j. A car and a bike *is/are* my means of transportation.

Independent Practice: Answers

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