

# Subject Verb Agreement

Subject verb agreement simply means the subject and verb must agree in number. This means both need to be singular or both need to be plural.

Basic rule: Singular subject takes a singular verb & plural subjects take plural verbs.

- A man is sitting there.
- Two men are sitting there.

Rule #01: 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.

Exception: If two subjects joined by 'and' denote to the same meaning/subject the verb is singular.

- The horse and carriage is ready at the

door. Notice the differences:

- The novelist and the poet are present.
- The novelist and poet is present.

Rule #02: If each /every/ everybody/ everyone/ no one/ no body/ one/ anyone/ someone/ either/ neither etc. are in the subject the verb is always singular.

- Each of these hot dogs is delicious.
- Everybody knows Mr. Jones.
- Either is correct.

Rule #03: If some/ many/ few/ a few/ both/ several/ all etc. are in the subject the verb is always plural.

- All of my friends are coming.
- Few students are tired.

Exceptions:



Many a/an + singular noun + singular verb

Example:

- Many a man has tried to vanquish the beast, but none have succeeded.



Some indefinite pronouns, such as, *some, any, none, most*, may be either singular or plural: with uncountable, use singular; with countable, use plural.

- Some of the sugar is on the floor.
- Some of the marbles are on the floor.



“All” is a two-faced word. It can be either singular (“is”) or plural (“are”). If a writer means “all of it,” she should use “is.” If she means “all of them,” she should go with “are.” So, it depends on whether the writer is thinking of the whole thing or the various things in it:

Examples:

- All the books are expensive.
- All the book is in Latin.



Few refers to **countable nouns**, and is used with the plural form to indicate not many persons or things. But little refers to **non-countable nouns**, and is used with the singular form to indicate that something exists only in a small amount or to a slight degree.

Examples:

- All she wanted was **a few** moments on her own. → some, a small number
- She had **few** moments on her own. → not many/almost none
- She saves **a little** money every month. → some, a small amount
- They had **little** money to spend. → not much/almost nothing

Rule #04: *Either ... or... , Neither ... nor... , Not only... but also... , ....or... , ...nor... , they* always take two subjects and the verb follows the subject sitting nearer to it.

- Neither Rahim nor his brothers are present here.
- Neither Rahim nor his brother is present here.
- Neither Rahim’s brothers nor Rahim himself is present here.
- Neither Rahim’s brother nor Rahim himself is present here.

Rule #05: Single ‘Gerund’ takes a single verb.

- Watching cartoon is a fun.
- Rising early is good for health.

- Reading newspaper is good for general knowledge.
- Swimming and running are good for health.

Rule #06: Collective nouns are words that imply more than one person but that are considered singular and take a singular verb, such as group, team, committee, class, and family.

- The team runs during practice.
- The committee decides how to proceed.
- The family has a long history.
- The jury has given its verdict.

Exception:

With collective nouns such as *group*, *jury*, *family*, *audience*, *population*, the verb might be singular or plural, depending on the writer's intent. (Collective nouns usually take *is*, but you can use *are* if you need to emphasize the individuals who belong to the group.)

- The jury are divided among their opinion.

Rule #07: Name of a single poem/book/film/novel/song etc. takes a single verb.

- *3 Idiots* is my favorite film.
- *Romeo and Juliet* is a good drama.

Rule #08: Use a singular verb with distances, measurements, periods of time, sums of money, etc., when considered as a unit.

- Three miles is too far to walk.
- Five years is the maximum sentence for that offense.
- Ten dollars is a high price to pay

BUT

- Ten dollars (i.e., dollar bills) were scattered on the floor.

Rule #09: Don't get confused about the subject. A subject will come before a phrase beginning with of. This is a key rule for understanding subjects.

- A bouquet of yellow roses lends color and fragrance to the room.

Rule #10: With words that indicate portions or fractional expressions such as *half of*, *part of*, *percentage of*, *majority of*, *number of*, *group of* are sometimes singular and sometimes plural, depending on the meaning.

- Half of the mangoes are rotten.

- Half of the mango is here on the plate.
- A number of people are gathering under the Banyan tree.
- The number of people grows each year.

Note: When you're talking about pairs, you're usually treating two items as a unit, so it's common to use *is*.

- A good pair of shoes is a luxury in some parts of the world.

Rule #11: In sentences beginning with *here* or *there*, the true subject follows the verb.

- There is **a book** on the desk.
- There are **two books** on the desk.

Note: The word *there's*, a contraction of *there is*, leads to bad habits in informal sentences like *There's a lot of people here today*, because it's easier to say "there's" than "there are." Take care never to use *there's* with a plural subject.

Rule #12: The word '*were*' replaces *was* in sentences that express a wish or are contrary to fact:

- If Joe **were** here, you'd be sorry.
- I wish it **were** Friday.

Rule #13: Parentheses are not part of the subject.

- Joe (and his trusty mutt) was always welcome.

Rule #14: Sometimes the subject is separated from the verb by such words as *along with*, *as well as*, *besides*, *not*, etc. These words and phrases are not part of the subject. Ignore them and use a singular verb when the subject is singular.

- The politician, along with the newsmen, is expected shortly.

Rule #15: Sometimes nouns take weird forms and can fool us into thinking they're plural when they're really singular and vice-versa. Words such as glasses, pants, pliers, and scissors are regarded as plural (and require plural verbs) unless they're preceded the phrase *pair of* (in which case the word *pair* becomes the subject). On the other hand, nouns such as civics, mathematics, dollars, measles, and news require singular verbs.

- My glasses were on the bed.
- My pants were torn.

- A pair of plaid trousers is in the closet.
- The news is on at six.

Rule #16: In the use of mathematical expressions, the following are accepted:

Examples:

- Seven plus three is ten.
- Seven and three are ten.
- Five times two are ten.
- Five minus two is three.
- Six divided by two is three.

Rule #17: With *one of those* \_\_\_\_\_ *who*, use a plural verb; but with *the only one of those* \_\_\_\_\_ *who*, use a singular verb.

- Hesham is one of those people who like to play guitar.
- Hesham is the only one of those people who likes to play guitar.

Rule #18: A phrase or clause between subject and verb does not change the number of the subject.

- The boys who went to the seminar were very sincere.