



Subject-Verb Agreement

Subjects and verbs must agree:

If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular; if the subject is plural, the verb must be plural.

However, sometimes this can be confusing:

- When the subject and verb are separated by other words:
Example: Our big pine **tree**, as well as the little trees, **was blown** down in the storm.
[*Tree* is the subject and is singular; disregard the *little trees*.]
- When the subject is preceded by “each” or “every”:
Example: **Every** girl and boy **is going** on the field trip.
[Even though *girl and boy* would be plural, *every* makes the subject singular.]
- When the subjects are joined by “either-or” or “neither-nor”:
Example: **Neither** Jim **nor** his sisters **are planning** on going to the party.
[With these pairs of words, make the verbs agree with subject closest to it.]
- When the sentences begin with “there is” or “there are”:
Example: There **are** a **pen** and a **pencil** on the desk.
[The subject comes *after* the verb when the sentence begins this way.]
- When the subject is singular and the subject complement is plural, or vice versa.
Example: My favorite **fruit is** *peaches*. **Peaches are** my favorite *fruit*.
[The linking verb agrees with the subject, not the subject complement (*peaches* and *fruit*).]
- When the subject looks plural but is really singular:
Example: **Mumps is** not a fun disease. **Mathematics is** my favorite subject.
[Other words like this include *news, shambles, physics, measles, & whereabouts*.]
- When the subject is a group that is thought of as singular.
Example: The **team is playing** the last game of the season tonight.
[Other nouns like this include *audience, family, committee, class, & crowd*.]
- When the subject refers to **time, distance, or money** as a unit:
Example: **Twenty dollars is** too much to pay for my dinner.
[But: *Twenty dollar bills* are in my wallet.]
- When the subject follows the verb in a question:
Example: When **are Robert and his sisters** coming to your house?
[Turn the question into a statement: *Robert and his sisters are* coming to your house.]
- When the subject is an **indefinite pronoun**:
Example: **Each** of us **is studying** for the test. **Few** of us **are playing**.

Singular Indefinite Pronouns

Singular indefinite pronouns include anyone, anything, anybody, everyone, everything, everybody, none, nothing, nobody, someone, something, somebody, each, either, & neither.

Example: **One** of the teachers **is giving** a test today.

Plural indefinite Pronouns

Plural indefinite pronouns include: both, many, few, & several.

Example: **Both** of the teacher’s **are giving** a test today.

Indefinite pronouns that can be singular or plural

Indefinite pronouns that can be singular or plural include: some, all, most, more, & any.

Example: **Some** of the cake **is missing**. **Some** of the cakes **are missing**.

Note: *The number of* is always singular. *A number of* is always plural.

Example: **The number of** voters **is increasing**. **A number of** voters **are arriving** to register.