WHAT IS SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT?
Subject-verb agreement is the relation of the subject of a sentence to the verb in terms of its number, such that singular subjects go with singular verbs, and plural subjects go with plural verbs.

The computer is black.  (singular)
The computers are pink.  (plural)

Present Tense Verbs

• When the subject is in third-person singular, present tense verbs end in -s or -es. Third-person singular subjects include singular nouns and third-person singular pronouns (he, she, it).

  She has the pictures from our reunion.
  Eric sings many original songs.

• For other subjects, such as plural nouns, first-person pronouns (I, we), second-person pronouns (you), or third-person plural pronouns (they), present tense verbs do not end in -s or -es.

  Teachers recommend setting aside plenty of time to study.
  In the morning, I always tell my sister that we need to hurry.

Indefinite Pronouns

• Some indefinite pronouns can be considered singular and therefore take singular verbs. These pronouns include: another, anyone, everyone, one, each, either, neither, anything, everything, something, nothing, nobody, and somebody.

  Everyone is urged to apply for this scholarship.
  Each of us feels prepared to participate in the discussion.
  Somebody uses this computer each day at noon.

• Some indefinite pronouns can be considered plural and therefore take plural verbs. These pronouns include: some, all, any, more, most, none, both, few, many, others, and several.

  All of the children are attending the class trip.
  Both of us keep our work space organized.
  Many species migrate over long distances.
• When two subjects are joined by *and*, the resulting compound subject usually requires a plural verb.

  The monitor and the tower *are* included in the package deal.
  The décor and the music *go* nicely together.

• Here are two exceptions to this rule:

  First, when the subjects (joined by *and*) form a single thing...

  *Peanut butter and jelly* is my favorite sandwich.

  Second, when *each* or *every* precedes a compound subject joined by *and*, the subject takes a singular verb.

  *Every table and computer* was labeled before we moved.

• When compound subjects are joined by *or* or by *either...or* or *neither...nor*, the verb agrees with the subject to which it is nearest.

  *Either water bottles or a water fountain* is always available for the thirsty campers.

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**Collective Nouns**

• Sometimes, collective nouns serve as subjects. When a collective noun refers to a group as a unit, it takes a singular verb; when it refers to the individuals or things that make up the group, it takes a plural verb.

  The town’s successful soccer *team* is considered to be a great asset to the town’s image.
  The soccer *team* all *have* their own special talents.

• Note that phrases starting with a portion of a unit such as *three-quarters*, *the majority*, or *ten cents* are treated as collective nouns. Likewise, when the amount represents a portion of a unit, it takes a singular verb. In the case of *dollars* as single units, use a plural verb form; when it describes an overall amount of money, it takes the singular.

  The majority of the class *is* working diligently.
  *Three-quarters* of his salary *is* used to pay bills.
  Forty dollars *is* too much to pay for that game
  *Eight dollars* were placed on the table.
When words come between subjects and verbs, the verb should agree with the subject, not with a word in the phrase in between.

The **games** won by this pitcher **are** rare.

When the phrase in the sentence (the words in between the subject and the verb) is introduced by *along with*, *as well as*, *in addition to*, *including*, and *together with*, the subject’s number does not change.

Heavy snow **along with** freezing temperatures **causes** hazardous driving **conditions**.

Sometimes singular subjects have plural forms. When this happens, the singular subject takes a singular verb, regardless of its plural form.

The **news** **comes** **on** at ten o’clock.

*Mathematics** **is** Andrea’s best subject.

When subject-verb order is reversed so that the verb comes before the subject, the subject and the verb must agree. Reverse the order to check the agreement.

There **are** currently ten students in the class.

Reverse: Ten **students** **are** currently in the class.

Linking verbs should agree with their subject, not with the subject complement.

The **problem** **was** termites.

Some collective nouns do not always follow the generally accepted procedure for verb agreement. Since *media* is the plural form of the noun *medium*, we would normally use a plural verb. (*However, some sources generally refer to the media as a unit and therefore argue that a singular verb should be used.*)

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