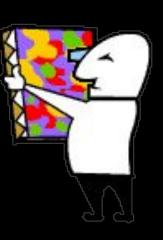


Agreement.

Sandra Boyd

Making Subjects and Verbs Agree

A subject and its verb are the basic parts of a sentence. A singular noun subject calls for a singular form of the verb. The subject and its verb are said to agree in number. Read the sentences on the next slide. You can see that the subjects and verbs agree in number.



Number means singular or plural.

Notice that in the present tense the singular form of the verb usually ends in -s or -es.

Examples:

Singular

Plura

A poet explores beauty.

The theme touches readers. readers.

Robert Frost writes about farms.

write about farms.

Poets explore beauty.

The themes touch

Frost and Robinson

Verbs and subject pronouns must also agree. Look at the chart below and notice how the verb changes. In the present tense the -s ending is used with the subject pronouns it, he, and she.

Singular Plural

▲ I read. We read.

read. You read.

he, it reads. They read.

Write the subject and the correct form of the verb in the following sentences.

- He (listen, listens) to the still air.
 - 2. Clouds (float, floats) lazily in the sky.
 - 3. One bird (begin, begins) to sing a song.
- 4. It (inspire, inspires) other birds to sing.
 - 5. The flock (continue, continues) to sing.
 - 6. Both (notice, notices) Paz's arrival.
 - 7. The distant mountains (appear, appears) blue.
 - ANSWERS TO ALL PRACTICE EXERCISES ARE AT THE END OF THE SHOW.

Problems with locating the Subject

Making the subject and verb agree is easy when the verb directly follows the subject. Sometimes, however, a prepositional phrase comes between the subject and the verb.

Examples:

The city, in all its moods, inspires poets.

The cities of the Midwest inspire poets.

Some sentences begin with *here* or *there*. *Here* or *there* is never the subject of a sentence. Look for the subject after the verb.

There is a great poem about Chicago.



To more easily identify the subject, rearrange the sentence so that the subject and verb are in their usual order.

- A great poem there is about Chicago.
- A great poem about Chicago is there.

In some interrogative sentences, a helping verb may come before the subject. The subject appears between the helping verb and the main verb.

Do these poems interest you?

You can check the subject verb agreement by making the sentence a declarative.

-These poems do interest you.

Write the subject and the correct form of the verb in the following sentences.

- 1. There (is, are) a few clouds hanging overhead.
- 2. Paz (wants, want) to talk with Frost.
- 3. There (is, are)the sound of water running.
 - 4. (Do, Does) Paz enjoy the sound of the water?
 - 5. Here (is, are) Frost's cabin at the top of the hill.
 - 6. (Do, Does) Frost's cabin seem remote?
 - 7. Where (is, are) the wooly dog and his master?

Collective Nouns and Other Special Subjects

It is difficult to tell whether certain special subjects are singular or plural. For example, collective nouns follow special agreement rules. A collective noun names a group. The noun has a singular meaning when used to tell about a group that acts as a unit. The noun has a plural meaning when used to describe members of the group acting as individuals.



The audience sits in silence. (one group, singular)

The audience sit on chairs and pillows. (individuals, plural)

Certain nouns such as *mumps* and *mathematics*, end in –s but take a singular verb. Other nouns that name one thing, such as *pliers* and *binoculars*, end in –s but take a plural verb.

News is important to us all. (singular)

Scissors are useful and often attractive.

(plural)



When the subject refers to an amount as a single unit, it is singular. When the subject refers to a number of individual units, it is plural.

- Fifty years seems a long time. (single unit)
- Fifty years pass quickly. (individual units)
- Five dollars is the admission price. (single unit)
- Five dollars are on the table. (individual units)

A title of a book or work of art is always singular even if the noun within the title is plural.

"The Victors" is a poem by Denise Levertov. (one poem)

Collected Earlier Poems was published in 1979. (one book)

Write the subject and the correct form of the verb in the following sentences.

- 1. Binoculars (offer, offers) a view of the valley.
- 2. The woods (is, are) home to many small animals.
- 3. A cluster of trees (provides, provide) a moment of coolness.
- 4. Frost's "Fire and Ice" (discusses, discuss) heat and cold.
- 5. Twenty minutes of walking (makes, make) Paz feel hot.

Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects

An indefinite pronoun is a pronoun that does not refer to a specific person, place, or thing.

Some indefinite pronouns are singular. Others are plural. When they are used as the subject, the verb must agree in number with these indefinite pronouns.

Indefinite Pronouns



Singular

Plural

another	everybody	no one	both
anybody	everyone	nothing	few
anyone	everything	one	many
anything	much	somebody	others
each	neither	someone	several
either	nobody	something	

All, any, most, none, and some may be singular or plural, depending on the phrase that follows.

- Everyone admires the poems of Emily Dickinson. (singular)
- Many of the poems deal with death and love. (plural)
- Most of her world is within four walls.
 (singular) (Most refers to world)
- Most of the poems are very short. (plural)
 (Most refers to poems)

Write the subject and the correct form of the verb in the following sentences.

- 1. Most of Robert Frost's poetry (deals, deal) with the landscape.
- 2. Most of his poems (uses, use) simple language.
 - 3. Some of us (remembers, remember) his reading at Kennedy's inauguration.
 - 4. Anyone present that day (treasures, treasure) the memory of Frost's reading.
 - 5. Everybody (remembers, remember) Angelou's reading at Clinton's inauguration.

Agreement with Compound Subjects

- A compound subject contains two or more simple subjects that have the same verb. The way the subjects are joined determines whether the compound subject takes a singula or a plural verb. When two or more subjects are joined by and or by the correlative conjunction both....and, the plural form of the verb should be used.
- Chicago, Boston, and Paris inspire many poets.
- Gwendolyn Brooks and Nikki Giovanni are poets.
- Both Brooks and Giovanni write about their times.

Agreement with Compound Subjects

Sometimes and is used to join two words that ar part of one unit or refer to a single person or thing. In these cases the subject is considered to be singular.

Her teacher and adviser is a famous writer.

Notice how teacher and adviser refer to the same person.

Agreement with Compound Subjects

When two or more subject are joined by *or*, *nor*, or the correlative conjunction either...or or neither...nor, the verb agrees with the subject that is the closest to it.

- The listener or the reader responds to the rhythm.
- Either music or street sounds inspire urban poets.

Write the subject and the correct form of the verb in the following sentences.

- 1. Frost and Paz (discusses, discuss) their countries' landscapes.
- 2. Vermont and Mexico (does, do) not look much alike.
- 3. According to Frost, either fear or loneliness (drives, drive) people away.
- 4. Neither fantasy nor science fiction (appeals, appeal) to Frost.
- 5. Both the work of young poets and the work of philosophers (interests, interest) him.

Correlative Conjunctions



Correlative conjunctions are pairs of words used to connect words or phrases in a sentence. They include

- both.....and
- either...or
- neither...nor
- not only...but also



Both New York and Paris are major art centers.

Note:

When a compound subject is joined by and, it is a plural subject. The verb must agree with the plural subject.



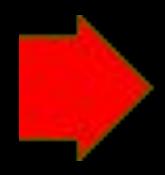
Jaime and Sue are artists.

Neither the twins **nor** Carla is a good painter.



THE END

ANSWERS TO PRACTICE SLIDES



Slide 6 Slide 10 Slide 15

- listens
- float
- begins
- 4. inspires
- 5. continues
- 6. notice
- 7. appear

- are
- wants
- ls
- Does
- is is
- 6. Does
- are

- offer
- are
- provides
- discusses
- makes

Slide 23

- discuss
- do do
- drives
- 4. appeal
- interest

Slide 19

- 1 deals
- use use
- 3. remember
- treasures
- remembers

- http://wwwnew.towson.edu/ows/exercisesub-verb.htm
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