



Subject and Verb Agreement

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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

Plural

A **poet explores** beauty.

Poets explore beauty.

The **theme touches** readers.
readers.

The **themes touch**

Robert Frost writes about farms.
write about farms.

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.

He read.

You read.

She, it reads. They read.



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



1. 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.**

PRACTICE

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.



PRACTICE

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.



PRACTICE

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.



PRACTICE

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 singular 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 are 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.

When a compound subject is joined by **or** or **nor**; the verb must agree with the **nearest part of the subject**.



Jaime **and** Sue are artists.

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

THE END

ANSWERS TO PRACTICE SLIDES



■ Slide 6

1. listens
2. float
3. begins
4. inspires
5. continues
6. notice
7. appear

■ Slide 10

1. are
2. wants
3. Is
4. Does
5. is
6. Does
7. are

■ Slide 15

1. offer
2. are
3. provides
4. discusses
5. makes

■ Slide 23

1. discuss
2. do
3. drives
4. appeal
5. interest

■ Slide 19

1. deals
2. use
3. remember
4. treasures
5. remembers

