

Lesson
1

Agreement in Person and Number

A verb must agree with its subject in person and number. Singular subjects take singular verbs; plural subjects take plural verbs. In the present tense of all verbs except *be*, the only form that changes is third person singular. For most verbs, add *-s* to make that form.

	Verbs Other than <i>Be</i>		<i>Be</i> , Present Tense		<i>Be</i> , Past Tense	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1st	I ride	we ride	I am	we are	I was	we were
2nd	you ride	you ride	you are	you are	you were	you were
3rd	he/she/it rides	they ride	he/she/it is	they are	he/she/it was	they were

Don't be distracted by words that come between the subject and verb.

The **passengers** on the 10:20 A.M. train **are departing** the train at this moment.

A. Identifying Subjects and Verbs That Agree in Number

In each sentence, underline the subject and the verb. On the line following the sentence, write whether the two parts of the sentence **Agree** or **Disagree** in number.

1. A public transportation system relieve traffic congestion. _____
2. The subway systems in many cities are complicated networks of tunnels. _____
3. Workers and shoppers in the city appreciates the speed of a subway. _____
4. Boston were the first city in the United States to have a subway. _____
5. The cost of riding most subways is less than parking fees in the downtown area. _____
6. Commuters in Washington, D.C., is pleased with the city's modern subway system. _____

B. Making Subjects and Verbs Agree in Number

In each sentence, underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

1. The subway in New York City (is, are) one of the largest in the world.
2. All of the cars on each train (is, are) filled during the rush hours.
3. The many lines in this system (carry, carries) commuters all over the city.
4. To many visitors, the trains in New York's system (is, are) unbelievably crowded.
5. The first section of New York's subway system (was, were) opened in 1904.
6. On the west coast, the Bay Area Rapid Transit, called BART, (connect, connects) San Francisco with neighboring cities.
7. Subway riders heading east out of the city (travel, travels) under the San Francisco Bay.
8. Many other large cities of the world (has, have) subway systems also.
9. Subways in Moscow (has, have) chandeliers and oil paintings.
10. The people of London (call, calls) their subway system "the tube."

Agreement in Person and Number

More Practice

A. Making Subjects and Verbs Agree in Number

In each sentence, underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

1. Our mascot, as well as the team and coach, (travel, travels) to all of the games.
2. The giraffe's long neck, like the pelican's beak and the crane's long legs, (has, have) been important in the animal's evolution.
3. Three rivers—the Mississippi, Missouri, and Illinois—(meet, meets) in St. Louis.
4. Many words in English (come, comes) from words in other languages.
5. Branwell Brontë, as well as his famous sisters, (was, were) an imaginative writer.
6. We all (need, needs) encouragement and recognition for our efforts.
7. Nurses in the burn unit (know, knows) that patients need emotional support.
8. Emus, flightless birds of Australia, (weigh, weighs) about 100 pounds each.
9. Trips around the world on a freighter (is, are) becoming quite popular.
10. I, together with my cousin, (plan, plans) to attend summer school.
11. The birth of conjoined twins (is, are) a relatively rare event.
12. The needles on a fir tree (is, are) actually its leaves.

B. Correcting Agreement Errors

Underline the six verbs in this paragraph that do not agree with their subjects. On the lines below, write the numbers of the sentences in which you find agreement errors. After each sentence number, write the subject and the verb form that agrees with it.

(1) The subway trains in Washington, D.C., is called the Metro. (2) The Metro links Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia with more than 90 miles of railway and over 400 Metrobus routes. (3) Each passenger riding the trains need to buy a farecard. (4) Farecard machines at the entrances of each station sells farecards and special passes for a variety of prices. (5) This way commuters to the city use the same farecard every day. (6) The Metro, along with all the Metrobuses, carry about 900,000 riders daily. (7) Metro passengers who must take a Metrobus can obtain a bus transfer for only 25 cents. (8) The five distinct lines in the Metro are named by color and by their final destinations. (9) The police force in the Metro stations monitor the activities to ensure that the Metro is one of the safest public transportation systems in the world. (10) The Metro, unlike other public transportation systems, prohibit eating, drinking, and smoking on the trains to keep them clean.

Agreement in Person and Number

Application

A. Proofreading for Errors in Agreement

Find the verbs in this paragraph that disagree with their subjects. On the lines below, rewrite the paragraph, correcting all agreement errors.

One of the greatest engineering feats of the 20th century are the tunnel under the English Channel. The idea of a tunnel between two countries are about 200 years old. However, lack of technology, funding, and interest delayed the project until 1987. The tunnel between Cheriton, England, and Calais, France, which opened in 1994, are called the Chunnel. The trains under the sea travels at 80 miles per hour. The capacity of the tunnels are 600 trains per day. Actually, three tunnels exist under the Channel. One of the tunnels are a service tunnel. Under the water, the tracks runs for 24 miles. The trip takes only 35 minutes.

B. Making Subjects and Verb Agree in Writing

Choose one of the topics below and write a paragraph of at least five sentences about it. Use the present tense throughout. Make sure the subjects and verbs of all the sentences agree.

- Why public transportation is a good idea
- San Francisco cable cars (or another old transportation system)
- Why I like (or dislike) using public transportation
- Ideas for improvement in public transportation in my area

Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects

Reteaching

When used as subjects, some indefinite pronouns are always singular and some are always plural. Others can be singular or plural depending on how they are used.

Indefinite Pronouns

Always Singular					Always Plural	Singular or Plural	
another	each	everything	no one	someone	both	all	most
anybody	either	much	nothing	something	few	any	none
anyone	everybody	neither	one		many	more	some
anything	everyone	nobody	somebody		several		

Each of our watches **shows** a different time.

Several of our watches **are** ten minutes ahead of the others.

All of our plans **depend** on coordination. (There are many plans.)

All of our timing **is** going haywire. (The timing is considered as one quantity.)

A. Identifying Indefinite Pronouns

In each sentence, underline the indefinite pronoun subject and the verb. On the line, label the subject as **Singular** or **Plural**. If the pronoun can be either singular or plural, draw two lines under the word naming the person(s) or thing(s) it refers to.

EXAMPLE Some of the planning was completed a month ago. *Singular*

Some of the plans were copied from an earlier project. *Plural*

- None of the runners are nationally known. _____
- Most of the race is uphill. _____
- Several of the best runners have not shown up. _____
- Some of the spectators have run onto the track. _____
- All of the judges' watches were synchronized. _____
- None of the track is free of debris. _____

B. Making Indefinite Pronouns and Verbs Agree

In each sentence, underline the indefinite pronoun used as the subject. Then underline the verb form in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

- Nobody among the runners (was, were) penalized due to the defective clock.
- Neither of the winners, male or female, (was, were) affected.
- Several of the slower runners (is, are) filing a complaint.
- Most of the judges (think, thinks) the results were accurate.
- Few of the races that I've run in (have, has) reported accurate results except for the winners.
- Some of the complaints (were, was) bizarre.
- But no one (was, were) complaining about the food and drinks afterwards.
- Anything out of the ordinary affecting a race always (cause, causes) controversy.
- One of the runners (was, were) saying that all the ruckus made it more fun.

Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects

More Practice

A. Making Verbs Agree with Indefinite Pronoun Subjects

In each sentence, underline the indefinite pronoun used as the subject. Also underline the verb. If the verb agrees with the subject, write **Correct** in the blank. If it does not agree, write the correct verb in the blank.

1. Anybody interested in police work needs to pass a comprehensive exam. _____
2. Some of the songs by Irving Berlin has become classics. _____
3. According to the magazine article, one of those stars are a supernova. _____
4. Neither of the islands have been inhabited for years. _____
5. Many of the flowers in Hawaiian tourist hotels have been imported. _____
6. Somebody able to speak two languages fluently are bilingual. _____
7. Most of the teas come from China, India, and Japan. _____
8. None of the astronomers knows much about the new space telescopes. _____
9. Everything in the exhibit of Egyptian sculptures were fascinating. _____
10. Most of the glaciers in Europe is in the French and Swiss Alps. _____
11. Either of these encyclopedias give information about the Tony Award. _____
12. Each of the candidates was well qualified to run for governor. _____

B. Using Verbs with Indefinite Pronoun Subjects

For each numbered sentence, write the correct present tense form of the verb on the appropriate line.

If football is a game of inches, running is a game of seconds and split seconds. **(1)** Everything (depend) on the accuracy and precision of the timing. **(2)** But nobody really (believe) in numbers that are in hundredths of a second. **(3)** Anybody who has ever operated a stopwatch (know) it takes a few hundredths just to push the button. **(4)** And do you suppose all of the officials (have) the same reaction time? **(5)** Some of the officials no longer (have) to rely on their reactions. **(6)** Several of the more important races now (use) electronic sensors at the starting and finish lines. **(7)** But all of the others (rely) on the fallible eye and perhaps slow thumb of a human race official.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Compound Subjects

Reteaching

A **compound subject** is made up of two or more subjects joined by a conjunction. A compound subject whose subjects are joined by *and* usually requires a plural verb.

Blueberries and strawberries **ripen** in different seasons.

Compound subjects that function as a single unit take singular verbs. Also, compound subjects preceded by *each*, *every*, or *many a* take singular verbs.

Strawberries and cream **is** a favorite summer dessert.

Every basket and box **is** filled with berries.

When the parts of a compound subject are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb should agree with the part closest to it.

Is a trowel or gloves in the bag? Either a trowel or gloves **are** weighing it down.

Making Verbs Agree with Compound Subjects

In each sentence, (1) first decide whether the compound subject is a special case. Do the two parts function as one unit? Or does *each*, *every*, or *many a* appear before the compound subject? Then underline both parts and the connecting word with one line. (2) If neither of these situations is true, underline each part of the compound subject separately and underline twice the conjunction joining the parts. Finally, underline the correct verb.

EXAMPLES Ham and eggs (is, are) Glenn's favorite breakfast.

Neither ham nor eggs (was, were) available at the campground.

- The beach or the forest preserve (is, are) a good place for a picnic.
- The sounds from the swimming pool and the scent of the honeysuckle (is, are) signs of summer.
- Oats and barley (grow, grows) well in sandy soil.
- Many a careless driver and pedestrian (has, have) been responsible for a serious accident.
- Neither the actors nor the director (has, have) been hired.
- The fire blazing in the fireplace and the cat sleeping in front of it (make, makes) a charming scene.
- Chicken and dumplings (taste, tastes) good on a cold evening.
- Once bitter enemies, the Serbians and the Croats (was, were) forced to become fellow citizens when Yugoslavia was created.
- Each hour and minute of this day (has, have) been spent thinking of my ill friend.
- Neither Prince Andrew nor his younger brother (expects, expect) to inherit the British throne.
- Crows cawing in a withered tree and scudding gray clouds (was, were) making me uncomfortable.
- The doctor or the nurses (check, checks) the vital signs of each patient.
- Every director and actor in the Milburn Dramatic Society (has, have) a role in the forthcoming series of plays.
- (Is, Are) spaghetti and meatballs on the menu tonight?

Compound Subjects

More Practice

A. Using the Correct Verb with a Compound Subject

Write the correct form of the given verb. Make it agree with the compound subject.

1. Neither the ostrich nor the emu (be) able to fly. _____
2. Music and dance (have) kept the Fine Arts Department solvent. _____
3. Either the clocks or the refrigerator (make) an annoying buzzing sound. _____
4. Elaine or one of her classmates (help) every afternoon at the pool. _____
5. Peaches and cream (be) my favorite dessert. _____
6. Every man and woman in this room (have) the right to express an opinion. _____
7. Either the characters or the plot (need) revising before your story can be published. _____
8. Track and field (be) one of the choices for your next physical education class. _____
9. Neither the bushes nor the tree (give) any shade during the afternoon. _____
10. After the prices change, each poster and price tag (have) to be corrected. _____
11. Both the paving bricks and the mortar (be) on sale this week. _____
12. Rock and roll (be) the subject of the display at the museum. _____

B. Correcting Errors in Agreement

For each sentence or clause with a compound subject, decide whether the subject and verb agree. If they do not, write the correct present tense verb. If they do, write **Correct**.

1. Both a beginner's bicycle and a utility bike has level handlebars. _____
2. Drop handlebars and racing saddles are found on lightweight bikes. _____
3. Neither a unicycle nor a tandem bike is appropriate for everyday use. _____
4. Stability and large baskets makes tricycles appealing to some adults. _____
5. Each nut and bolt need to be examined before you buy a bicycle. _____
6. If either the spokes or the wheel seem defective, be careful. _____
7. Reflectors and a light is necessary if you ride your bike at night. _____
8. A generator or batteries provide power for the light. _____
9. Either a rack or a basket give you a way to carry things. _____
10. Some tools for repairs and a good lock completes your accessories. _____

Other Confusing Subjects

Reteaching

Collective nouns name groups of people or things. Examples include *council*, *flock*, and *family*. If a collective noun subject refers to the group as a unit, it takes a singular verb. If the noun refers to members of the group as individuals, it takes a plural verb.

The orchestra **is** world-famous. (seen as one)

On break, the orchestra **are** all over the building. (seen separately)

Phrases or clauses that serve as subjects of sentences always take singular verbs.

Auditioning for the orchestra **is** not an easy experience.

Some nouns ending in *-s* appear to be plural but are singular in meaning and therefore take a singular verb. Examples include *measles* and *molasses*. Nouns ending in *-ics*, such as *mathematics* and *physics*, are almost always singular. A few such words—*ethics* and *acoustics* for example—can be singular or plural depending on the context.

Acoustics **is** the study of sound.

The acoustics in this hall **provide** an excellent setting for the orchestra.

Certain nouns ending in *-s*, such as *scissors*, *pants*, *shorts* and *glasses*, take plural verbs even though they name one thing.

Numerical amounts and titles of works of art, literature, or music are considered singular. Fractional numbers are singular when they refer to a singular noun and plural when they refer to a plural noun.

Pictures at an Exhibition **is** on the program. Two-thirds of it **has** been played.

Using Verbs That Agree with Problem Subjects

In each sentence, underline the subject and the form of the verb that agrees with it. If the subject is a fractional number, underline twice the word it refers to.

- Twenty minutes of exercise (is, are) recommended by many experts in the health field.
- A pair of pheasants (was, were) sitting in the long grass.
- "A penny saved is a penny earned" (is, are) a proverb by Benjamin Franklin.
- (Is, Are) \$50 a fair price for a ticket to a hockey game?
- Whether we will be allowed to lift off before the other planes on the runway (has, have) not yet been decided.
- Astrophysics (is, are) concerned with the physical qualities of heavenly bodies.
- The realistic *Nighthawks* (was, were) painted by Edward Hopper in 1942.
- Four-tenths of the voters (has, have) not voted today.
- To find my lost contact lens (is, are) my top priority at the moment.
- The jury (has, have) been allowed to go to their homes finally.
- Aerobics (is, are) designed to improve one's cardiovascular system.
- Well-sharpened scissors (cut, cuts) cleanly through the cloth.
- One-fifth of the winter (is, are) behind us.
- Cleaning these pots and pans (require, requires) real scrubbing.

Other Confusing Subjects

More Practice

A. Using Verbs That Agree with Problem Subjects

In each sentence, underline the verb that agrees in number with the subject.

1. *Burmese Days* (describe, describes) life in the Far East before World War II.
2. The staff at Valley Lake Day Camp (hold, holds) one meeting each week.
3. Raking leaves into the streets (is, are) allowed through November.
4. For Debra, physics (is, are) a passion.
5. Carrying all those boxes into the garage (seem, seems) like a big job.
6. Two-thirds of the crackers (is, are) crushed.
7. The League of Women Voters (was, were) registering all eligible voters in town.
8. The news often (depress, depresses) us with reports of violent events.
9. Putting too many purchases on charge cards (is, are) a dangerous practice.
10. Ten minutes (seem, seems) like an eternity at times.
11. "Romeo, Romeo. Wherefore art thou Romeo?" (is, are) a line from *Romeo and Juliet* that is often misunderstood.
12. To bring in a consultant at this stage of the proceedings (strike, strikes) me as a waste of money.

B. Writing Sentences

Complete each of these sentences by adding a present-tense verb as described in the parentheses. Add any other needed words.

EXAMPLE (singular verb) Three-tenths of the wall is already painted.

1. (singular verb) Our baseball team _____

2. (plural verb) Our baseball team _____

3. (plural verb) Four-fifths _____

4. (singular verb) Four-fifths _____

5. (singular verb) The dance committee _____

6. (plural verb) The dance committee _____

Special Agreement Problems

Reteaching

The form of some sentences can make identifying their subjects difficult.

In an **inverted statement** and many **questions**, the subject follows the verb or part of the verb phrase. Rearrange the words in standard order to find the subject, and then choose the correct verb.

Is the gym open? The gym is open.

Down came the balls from the top shelf. The balls came down from the top shelf.

An **imperative sentence** may not state the subject; it is almost always *you*.

(You) **Show** your ID and pass at the front desk.

In most sentences beginning with **here** or **there**, the subject usually follows the verb.

There are lockers that you can rent by the day or week.

In a sentence with a **predicate nominative**, the verb must agree with the subject, not the predicate nominative.

Aerobic exercises are one way to build stamina. One way to build stamina is aerobic exercises.

When a relative pronoun—*who*, *which*, or *that*—is the subject of an adjective clause, its number is determined by its antecedent.

The lifeguards who work weekends are friendly. (refers to *lifeguards*, plural)

The lifeguard who works tonight is new. (refers to *lifeguard*, singular)

Solving Agreement Problems

In each sentence, underline the subject (if it is stated). Then underline the correct verb.

1. There (is, are) no excuses for avoiding daily exercise.
2. Exercises (is, are) a way of improving mood as well as muscle.
3. (Has, Have) the schedule for the pool changed lately?
4. Here at the recreation center (is, are) many valuable programs.
5. Behind the building (is, are) a running track for summer use.
6. Inside (is, are) treadmills, rowing machines, and stationary bikes.
7. The parents who (bring, brings) their children for classes often exercise, too.
8. When (do, does) the swimming classes for beginners start?
9. One sign of an unhealthy body (is, are) puny muscles.
10. In the green cabinet across the hall (is, are) the volleyballs.
11. The piece of equipment that (is, are) the busiest is the new treadmill.
12. The colorful plastic lines (is, are) the separation between the two parts of the pool.
13. There (is, are) stretching, weight-lifting, and aerobics classes on the weekend.
14. On the bulletin board (is, are) the sign-up sheet.
15. Parking spaces for the handicapped (is, are) a clear indication that the center is used by all groups in the community.
16. Why (is, are) the pool closing early on Sunday?
17. The rec center's front door, which (is, are) always open, is opposite the post office.
18. Before leaving, (remember, remembers) to sign out.

Special Agreement Problems*More Practice***A. Solving Agreement Problems**

In each sentence, find and underline the subject if it is stated. Then write the present tense form of the verb that agrees with the subject.

1. (Do) the Bloomsbury Group include Virginia Woolf?
2. Ralph is the guide who (lead) the Saturday morning walks.
3. Here (be) a picture of two of them.
4. Are these the vases that (belong) to Mrs. Peabody?
5. Novels (be) the Victorians' legacy.
6. Here (be) the Byron poems I told you about.
7. This is a movie for people who (need) a pick-me-up.
8. Here (come) some of our noisiest relatives!
9. Those old travel guides (be) still an authoritative source.
10. What he cared about (be) words.
11. Ask the guard who (be) standing at the front door when the store will open.
12. Books (be) the obsession of the bibliophile.
13. We opened every box that (have) your name on it, but we couldn't find the sweaters you packed.
14. There but for fortune (go) we.

B. Making Subjects and Verbs Agree

Complete each quotation with the correct form of the verb *be*.

1. There _____ nothing in this world constant, but inconstancy.
Jonathan Swift
2. Art for Art's sake _____ an empty phrase.
George Sand
3. Reviewers _____ usually people who would have been poets, historians, biographers, etc., if they could.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge
4. Language _____ the archives of history.
Ralph Waldo Emerson
5. Every mile _____ two in winter.
George Herbert

Special Agreement Problems

Application

A. Using Sentence Variety and Agreement

All these items have errors in subject-verb agreement. Before rewriting each sentence or pair of sentences with correct agreement, make the change indicated in parentheses.

EXAMPLE Two baby birds rests under their mother's wings. (Change subject-verb order.)

Under their mother's wings rest two baby birds.

1. Here is Nancy's treasure. Here is dozens of two-inch stuffed dolls. (Combine the sentences using a predicate nominative.)

2. A large park full of beautiful trees are across the street. (Change subject-verb order.)

3. The team is playing against us on Saturday. The team are leading the league. (Combine sentences using a subordinate clause.)

4. The bus are coming. (Use *Here* to begin the sentence.)

5. The others on your team are wearing their shorts in this cold weather. (Change the statement into a question.)

B. Writing with Sentence Variety and Subject-Verb Agreement

Choose one of the topics below and write a paragraph of at least seven sentences, including these: 1) a sentence, either a statement or question, with inverted order of subject and verb; 2) a sentence beginning with *here* or *there*; 3) a sentence with a predicate nominative. Be sure to use correct subject-verb agreement in every sentence.

My worst nightmare

My favorite time of day

A friend who always makes me laugh

What I do to relax
