

Lesson 1

Agreement in Person and Number

Teaching

A verb must agree with its subject in number. Singular subjects take singular verbs; plural subjects take plural verbs. The form of a verb must also agree with the person of its subject. Except for the verb *be*, the only form that changes is third person, singular present.

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

Don't be distracted by other words separating the subject and verb.

The **girl** in the tap shoes **has danced** since she was six.

A. Identifying Subjects and Verbs That Agree in Number

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

- Ballet dancers train for many years. _____
- Those tap shoes on the shelf is a size too small for me. _____
- The costume with the bright spangles was reflecting light from the stage. _____
- The dancers in Ms. Lewis's class is practicing for a holiday program. _____
- Near the end of the *pas de deux*, the man tosses the woman into the air. _____

B. Making Subjects and Verbs Agree in Number

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

- The St. Louis flag (show, shows) two wavy bars and a *fleur-de-lis*.
- Many masks worn at this party (cost, costs) a great deal.
- I (was, were) sure that our float would be the best in the parade.
- Motorists in England (drive, drives) on the left-hand side of the road.
- Over one million people (visit, visits) the monument annually.
- The last two albums by that singer (has, have) gone platinum.
- The crown jewels of England (are, is) kept in the sublevel of the Tower of London.
- Caliban, one of Shakespeare's fantastic characters, (is, are) a revolting monster.
- You (was, were) the best speaker in the debate on Friday.
- One person standing before the 4,000 patrons (sing, sings) the anthem.
- Cahokia Mounds State Park (call, calls) to mind Native American settlements.
- Those tests (was, were) the hardest ones so far this year.

Lesson
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Agreement in Person and Number

More Practice

A. Making Subjects and Verbs Agree in Number

On the line to the right of each sentence, write the present tense form of the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

1. Several buildings of historical interest (lie) in or near the downtown area. _____
2. That route past the fallen trees (be) closed during clean-up. _____
3. Many plays by Shakespeare (take) place in Italian towns. _____
4. Tropical plants (grow) in the greenhouse attached to the garden center. _____
5. This memorial (honor) the men and women who served in World War I. _____
6. The girls on Jan's team (be) determined to win the competition next week. _____
7. Every tourist, along with residents, (enjoy) the sight of the Louvre. _____
8. I (be) ready to read my essay to the class now. _____
9. The London Underground, a system of subway rails, (transport) millions of riders. _____
10. You (be) the only one in our class competing in the obstacle course. _____

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 correct verb form.

(1) Don't laugh. I, along with several teammates, are in the dance program next week. (2) Our coach, of all people, is responsible. (3) Dancers of any quality has great muscle tone, he says. (4) Apparently this fan of forward passes appreciate dance as well as sports. (5) Anyway, the arts department has scheduled this show. (6) Posters all over the school asks for volunteers. (7) My buddies on the team have friends in a dance class. (8) One of their friends have taught us a simple dance. (9) The dancers from our team practices every night. (10) We know our coach is in for a surprise.

Lesson 1

Agreement in Person and Number

Application

A. Proofreading for Errors in Agreement

Find the verbs in this paragraph that do not agree with their subjects. On the lines below, rewrite the paragraph, correcting all agreement errors.

Probably the most popular ballet in the United States is *The Nutcracker*. In some cities, the local ballet company, at the request of many patrons, perform this ballet every year through the winter holidays. Many families in town has a tradition of seeing the ballet annually. Small parts in the performance is played by children from the area. The story of the ballet, like that of many other tales, tell of a dream. At a Christmas party, a little girl receives the gift of a nutcracker in the form of a bold soldier. That night, the nutcracker appears in the girl's dream. Fantastic characters in the dream dances to beautiful music by Peter Tchaikovsky.

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.

- The Best Dancers I Know Why I Like (or Dislike) Ballet
- Famous Dancers The Best Dance Scene(s) in Movies
- a popular dance of past or present (Charleston, twist, break dancing, etc.)
- an ethnic dance (the polka, Irish step dancing, the hora, African dance, etc.)

Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects

Teaching

Some **indefinite pronouns** are always singular. Examples are *each, everyone, neither, nobody, another, anybody, anyone, and something*. They take singular verbs.

Each of the playgoers **has** a favorite play by Shakespeare.

Some indefinite pronouns, including *several, few, both, and many*, are always plural. They take plural verbs.

Many at tonight's play **agree** that this performance was special.

Some indefinite pronouns, including *some, all, most, and none*, are singular or plural depending on how they are used.

Most of the actors **were** outstanding. (There are many actors.)

Most of the publicity **was** accurate. (The publicity is considered as one quantity.)

A. Identifying Indefinite Pronouns

In each sentence, underline the indefinite pronoun used as the subject and the verb. On the line, label the subject **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 music was written for this performance. *Singular*
Some of the songs were from Shakespeare's time *Plural*

1. Nobody among the actors is nationally known. _____
2. All of the evening flies past. _____
3. Several of the critics are in the audience. _____
4. Some of the scenery stands out in your memory. _____
5. Most of the famous speeches sound fresh and new. _____
6. None of the other current plays outshine this one. _____

B. Making Indefinite Pronouns and Verbs Agree

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

1. Few of the trees (has, have) leaves anymore.
2. Although Toni bumped the table, none of the soup (was, were) spilled.
3. Everyone at the stores (is, are) in a holiday mood.
4. Nothing in these boxes (look, looks) like my lost sweater.
5. Most of the cars in this lot (is, are) sport utility vehicles.
6. Anybody on the staff (substitute, substitutes) in emergencies.
7. Either of the twins (know, knows) where to find the key.
8. All of her theories (seem, seems) to be stolen from this book.
9. Several of the songs on the album (has, have) an exotic Oriental sound.
10. Some of the baby's toys (amuse, amuses) his parents, too.

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. Something in those leftovers have an unpleasant odor. _____
2. Many of our traffic lights are still out. _____
3. Neither of the chairs appear very strong. _____
4. All of the stones in the wall was quarried locally. _____
5. Several of the accessories was included in the package price. _____
6. Nobody on their team help each other. _____
7. Most of the soil in those containers come from Mr. Doohan's garden. _____
8. Everybody in line for tickets has an umbrella. _____
9. None of our worry were needed. _____
10. Both of the possible dates for the picnic is in August. _____
11. Most of Steve's neighbors tolerate his bugle practice gracefully. _____
12. All of the spokespeople for the city agrees on the need for street repairs. _____

B. Using Verbs with Indefinite Pronoun Subjects

Write each numbered sentence on the appropriate line, using the correct present tense form of the verb.

The final scenes of *Romeo and Juliet* move quickly. **(1)** Few of the characters (know) that Romeo and Juliet are secretly married. **(2)** Everything (fall) apart after Juliet drinks the sleeping potion. Romeo should be told that she is merely sleeping. **(3)** None of the message (get) delivered. **(4)** Because of this mistake, both of the "star-crossed lovers" (commit) suicide. **(5)** All of the Veronese people (mourn) with the reconciled Capulet and Montague families.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects

Application

A. Checking Agreement of Verbs with Indefinite Pronoun Subjects

Proofread this paragraph for errors in subject-verb agreement. Underline any verb that does not agree with its subject.

In William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, no one knows the origin of the feud between the Montagues and Capulets. Many of the citizens in Verona has participated in the feud. At the Capulets' masked ball, everyone understand that the prince will punish any who fight. None of the guests is disruptive. Some of the Montagues attends in costume. Nobody else holds the interest of Juliet after this youngest one of the Capulets meet Romeo at the party. In turn, nothing but loving thoughts are on Romeo's mind after that meeting. But in the course of the play, all of the young lovers' plans end in tragedy.

B. Using Verbs Correctly with Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects

Think of a play you have seen about which you can write a paragraph. Use at least five of these phrases as subjects of sentences. You may use the phrases in any order, and may write additional sentences with different subjects as well. Write your paragraph on the lines below. Make sure each verb is in the present tense and agrees with its subject.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Somebody in the cast | All of the audience members |
| Both of the scenes | Many of them |
| None of it | Some of the action |

Compound Subjects

Teaching

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.

Ham, eggs, and juice **are** in the refrigerator.

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

Ham and eggs **is** a popular breakfast.

Every adult and child **needs** a nutritious breakfast.

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

Is the ham *or* the eggs in the oven? Either the ham *or* the eggs **are** there.

Making Verbs Agree with Compound Subjects

In each sentence, first decide whether the compound subject is a special case.

(1) Do the two parts function as one unit? Or does *each*, *every*, or *many* 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 word joining the parts. Finally, underline the correct verb.

EXAMPLES Each school club and sports team (has, have) its own set of rules.
Neither the bees nor their queen (want, wants) to leave the tree.

1. Every spring and fall (see, sees) me cleaning out my closet to make more space.
2. Neither Friday night nor weekend afternoons (was, were) open on Don's schedule.
3. Either my uncle or his children (has, have) planned to bring a barbecue grill.
4. That tree or those bushes (hold, holds) the robin's nest.
5. Many a young man and woman (is, are) surprised by the SAT vocabulary test.
6. One boy or two girls at the school (has, have) a chance for that scholarship.
7. Neither Viola nor her brothers (like, likes) turnips.
8. Rhythm and blues (is, are) my favorite type of music.
9. Certain elements and combinations of elements (is, are) called minerals.
10. The students and teachers in the room (has, have) a real interest in the speakers.
11. Neither Marcus nor Cara (has, have) spoken before a large group before.
12. Each clock and watch in the store (is, are) reset for Daylight-Saving Time.
13. Either the highway or the side streets (provide, provides) a fast route to the theater.
14. My cousins or my sister (borrow, borrows) my camera every month.
15. The flowers and the ferns (was, were) arranged in a vase.
16. Either the phone connections or the modem itself (cause, causes) the computer to crash whenever I go online.

Lesson
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Compound Subjects

More Practice

A. Using the Correct Verb with a Compound Subject

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

1. Either my grandparents or my cousins (have) time to watch my game. _____
2. Next week or those two weeks (suit) me best for a vacation. _____
3. Neither the students nor their teacher (want) to miss the trip because of snow. _____
4. Spaghetti and meatballs (take) very little effort to prepare. _____
5. Those sparrows or that chickadee (eat) most of the seed in our feeder. _____
6. Each knob and handle (catch) my sweater as I walk through the kitchen. _____
7. The groceries and the laundry (be) still in the car. _____
8. The Rumford Medal in physics and the Emerson Thoreau Medal in literature (be) given by the American Academy of Arts and Science. _____
9. Each junior and senior (have) a voice in the recommendation. _____
10. The electrician or the custodians (be) going to repair the clock. _____
11. Rock and roll (have) been popular for half a century. _____
12. Neither the horn nor the brake lights on that car (work). _____

B. Correcting Errors in Agreement

Find the mistakes in the paragraph. For each sentence, write the correct present tense verb to agree with the subject. If the verb does agree, write **Correct**.

(1) Very bright light and very dim light are both perceived by the human eye. (2) Neither the eye nor the other sense organs is invulnerable. (3) Care and appropriate caution is necessary for healthy eyes. (4) Every child, athlete, and other active adult need unbreakable plastic lenses in eyeglasses. (5) Either goggles or a protective shield in front of the eyes are recommended for workers exposed to hazardous materials. (6) Welders, carpenters, painters, and chemists have to exercise good judgment in caring for their eyes.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

Compound Subjects

Application

A. Combining Sentences Using Compound Subjects

Rewrite the following paragraph, combining sentences where possible by using compound subjects. Use *and*, *or*, *nor*, *either . . . or*, or *neither . . . nor* to join the parts of the subject. Keep the action in the tense of the two original sentences that are joined.

Dad often goes fishing. I often go along. We bring home a bucket of fish. Every little fish smells. Every big fish has an odor, too. So Dad does not like to cook fish. Mom does not like doing that, either. Therefore, my sisters and I have learned to cook fish dishes. Fish with rice is a satisfying meal. Or fish and chips makes a good meal. How did we learn to cook? Books have been helpful. CD-ROMs have been good, too. So have cooking shows on TV. Now everyone in the family, except Dad, can cook. However, my sisters do not clean the fish. Mom does not clean the fish. Can you guess who gets stuck with that job?

B. Using the Correct Verb with Compound Subjects

Think of a skill you have learned to do on your own. Write a paragraph explaining what you learned, how you did so, and why. Use at least one example of each of these: a compound subject whose parts are joined by *and*; a compound subject whose parts are joined by *or* that takes a singular verb; and a compound subject whose parts are joined by *or* that takes a plural verb.

Other Confusing Subjects

Teaching

A **collective noun** names a group of people or things. Examples include *team*, *family*, *committee*, *jury*, and *herd*. When the members act as a unit, the collective noun takes a singular verb. When they act as individuals, it takes a plural verb.

The herd **is** valuable. (seen as one)

The herd **are** in their stalls. (seen separately)

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

That family farms are disappearing **is** a sad truth. To deny it **is** useless.

Some nouns ending in *-s* appear to be plural but are singular in meaning and therefore take a singular verb. Examples include *mumps*, *mathematics*, *news*, and *molasses*. Other nouns ending in *-s*, such as *pants*, take plural verbs even though they name one thing.

Simple mathematics **proves** the difficulty of farming profitably.

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

The Farmers **is** a painting at the museum. Two-thirds of it **shows** equipment.

When a relative pronoun is the subject of an adjective clause, it agrees in number with its antecedent. Relative pronoun subjects include *who*, *which*, *what*, and *that*.

Heavy debt is one of the problems **that** **drive** farmers into giving up. (*That* refers to *problems*, so it takes a plural verb.)

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 relative pronoun or a fractional number, underline twice the word it refers to.

1. Numismatics (is, are) the study of coins and medals.
2. The cast (is, are) changing their costumes during intermission.
3. How the magician got out of the locked safe (puzzle, puzzles) us.
4. My scissors (is, are) made for left-handed people.
5. Two-thirds of a gallon (is, are) enough to paint the whole room.
6. Dr. Chian is a surgeon who (specialize, specializes) in reconstructive surgery.
7. To wait for some Web sites to download (challenge, challenges) the patience of every Web surfer.
8. *Pictures at an Exhibition*, an orchestral work, (was, were) inspired by actual paintings seen by the composer at an exhibition.
9. Our team (has, have) the best record in the league.
10. Listening to loud music for long periods (cause, causes) hearing loss.
11. Two hours (seem, seems) a long time to wait to see the doctor.
12. This article was written by two reporters who (was, were) recently hired.
13. (Is, Are) the binoculars in the case?

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. If the subject is a relative pronoun or a fractional number, underline twice the word it refers to.

1. The TV news (start, starts) at half past the hour.
2. Over 30 hours (is, are) required for the hike up the mountain.
3. How well (do, does) your sewing scissors cut heavyweight corduroy?
4. Whether a replacement switch (is, are) available is not yet known.
5. *Belles on Their Toes* (is, are) still a funny book, even if it is dated.
6. A panel of experts (is, are) going to decide the question.
7. One-fifth of that pie (belong, belongs) to me.
8. Mentioning old cars to my grandfather always (set, sets) off reminiscences.
9. The family (disagree, disagrees) on where they should spend the holidays.
10. Mr. Southard is one of the teachers who (insist, insists) on conferences.

B. Writing Sentences

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

EXAMPLE (plural verb) Three-fourths of these diskettes are already full.

1. (singular verb) The women's choir _____

2. (plural verb) The women's choir _____

3. (plural verb) Two-thirds _____

4. (singular verb) Two-thirds _____

5. (singular verb) The work crew _____

6. (plural verb) The work crew _____
