

Subject-Verb Agreement

Lesson One: Intervening Phrases and Clauses



Concept: Intervening phrases and clauses _____ subject - verb agreement.

Examples:

The discovery of mummies interests many people.
singular singular

John, accompanied by Gracie, goes to the movie every Saturday.
singular singular

The rivers that bordered Mesopotamia are the Tigris and the Euphrates.
plural plural

Remember the rule of ONE S:
Unless a word ends in S (like Davis), there will only be one S between the subject and verb.
This works because to make a verb plural, you TAKE AWAY the S.

Mark out any intervening phrases and clauses. Underline the subject. Then circle the correct form of the verb from the choices in parentheses.

1. The paper in those boxes (is, are) for the copy machine.
2. Her computer plus her purse (was, were) left in her car.
3. The London Bridge, as well as several other bridges, (spans, span) the Thames River.
4. A traffic light in front of steady streams of traffic (keeps, keep) the movement of vehicles under control.
5. Each entry within the guidelines (receives, receive) a thorough reading.
6. This batch of cute, little kittens (is, are) ready to be sold.
7. The coach, as well as the fans, (was, were) disappointed in the team's performance.
8. The arrival of the new costumes (has, have) caused excitement among the cast of the play.
9. The artwork, in addition to the jewelry, (are, is) to be auctioned off in May.
10. An acre of trees and meadows (surrounds, surround) the house.
11. Linda, one of my good friends, (visits, visit) England every year.
12. Bilbo Baggins, who faces goblins, trolls, and dragons, (is, are) the protagonist of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*.
13. A mask from the South Seas, along with two feather capes made in Peru, (was, were) featured in the museum.
14. The doctor, together with his nurses, (is, are) attending a conference.
15. The actress signing autographs (has, have) won two awards.

Lesson Two: Subjects of Linking Verbs



Concept: A linking verb must agree with its subject, regardless of the number of its predicate nominative.


Example: Jalapeno peppers are the main ingredient in my hot sauce.
plural plural singular

Underline the subject. Then circle the correct form of the verb from the choices in parentheses.

1. The car factory's greatest asset (is, are) its employees.
2. The best part of the movie (was, were) the chase scenes.


3. These pearls (appears, appear) to be one of Aunt Gracie's heirlooms.
4. Aunt Gracie's farms (is, are) a quiet retreat for the entire family.
5. The highlight of the Fourth of July celebration (remains, remain) the fireworks.

Lesson Three: Relative Pronouns

 **Concept:** When *who*, *which*, or *that* (relative pronouns) act as a subject of a subordinate clause, its verb will be singular or plural depending on the number of the _____.

Example:

The name Sphinx was given to the statue by the Greeks, who were associating it with a monster from the ancient Greek myth.



 plural plural


In each sentence, draw an arrow from the pronoun to the antecedent. Then circle the correct form of the verb from the choices in parentheses.

1. The assistant principal assigns detention to students who (is, are) tardy six times.
2. Maya Angelou is an author who (use, uses) imagery most skillfully.
3. In addition, Sarah, who (is, are) a great writer, loves cooking.
4. The children gave a handful of potato chips to the dog, who (was, were) sniffing around the picnic tables.
5. The children who (skateboards, skateboard) in the street are especially noisy.

Lesson Four: Compound Subjects

Concept: A compound subject consists of _____ nouns or pronouns that are joined by a conjunction and have the same verb. The parts of a compound subject are usually connected by *and*, *or*, *nor*, *either - or*, and *neither - nor*.


 A compound subject joined by _____ is generally _____ and must have a plural verb. There is one exception to the *and* rule. Sometimes the two subjects connected by *and* form a _____. When this happens, the subject is regarded as _____ and takes a singular verb.

 If one or more singular subjects are joined to one or more plural subjects by _____, the subject _____ **to the verb** determines agreement.

In each sentence, circle the correct form of the verb or verb phrase from the choices in parentheses.

1. Bacon and eggs (is, are) a popular combination.
2. The owner and manager, Mr. Brown, (runs, run) the store.
3. Either the twins or John (is going, are going) to take charge when Mr. Brown is absent.
4. Macaroni and cheese (tastes, taste) best when it's hot.
5. Neither the managers nor the owner (has signed, have signed) yet.

Lesson Five: Collective Nouns

 **Concept:** A collective noun is a noun that is singular in form but represents a group of persons or a collection of objects usually considered as a unit. Collective nouns may be either singular or plural, depending on their use in the sentence. Words such as *crowd*, *troop*, *herd*, *team*, *people*, *flock*, *jury*, *family*, or *committee*, are collective nouns.

Here is the key: Imagine a flock of pigeons pecking at birdseed on the ground. Suddenly, a cat races out of the bushes. What do the pigeons do? They fly off as a unit in an attempt to escape the predator, wheeling through the sky in the same direction.

People often behave in the same manner, doing one thing in unison with the other members of their group. When these people are part of a collective noun, that noun becomes singular and requires singular verbs and pronouns.

Examples:

The band is going to the Orange Bowl this year. {no clues = collective}

The band, as usual, were straggling into the auditorium in groups of two or three. {individual, not the entire band}

Collective or Not?


Look at the rest of the sentence. If there are clear clues that show the subjects are acting individually, the subject is NOT collective.

In each sentence, circle the correct form of the verb or verb phrase from the choices in parentheses.

1. The members of the jury (has returned, have returned) to their homes.
2. The choir (was told, were told) to bring their hymnals.
3. The family (has given, have given) their contributions.
4. The class (has been divided, have been divided) into sections.
5. The public (demands, demand) a solution to the problem.

Lesson Six: Nouns That Look Like Plurals

Concept: Nouns that are plural in form but singular in meaning agree with singular verbs. Some of these nouns name branches of knowledge: *acoustics*, *aesthetics*, *civics*, *economics*, *gymnastics*, *mathematics*, *physics*, *politics*, and *social studies*. Others are singular in meaning because, like collective nouns, they name singular units: *confetti*, *macaroni*, *measles*, *molasses*, *news*, *ricketts*, and so on.

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- Some of these words are especially tricky. When *ethics* and *politics*, for example, name characteristics or qualities rather than branches of knowledge, their meanings are plural.
 - Also, such words as *eyeglasses*, *pliers*, *scissors*, and *trousers (pants)* generally take plural verbs although they name single items. **Hint: Think a pair of eyeglasses. A pair = 2, so that's why it's plural.**

In each sentence, circle the correct form of the verb or verb phrase from the choices in parentheses.

1. Does Paul know that his pants (has been sent, have been sent) to the cleaners?
2. Physics (attempts, attempt) to explain matter, energy, and their interaction.
3. Athletics (is, are) popular at North Gwinnett High School.
4. Eyeglasses (was prescribed, were prescribed) by Rachel's ophthalmologist.
5. Measles (is, are) a contagious.

Lesson Seven: Indefinite Pronouns

Concept: *The pronouns in the Either column take a singular verb if the antecedent is singular and a plural verb if the antecedent is plural.

Singular			Plural	Either
Another	Everybody	Nothing	Both	★ Some ★ ★ Most ★ All None Any More
Anybody	Everyone	One	Few	
Anyone	Everything	Somebody	Many	
Anything	Neither	Someone	Others	
Each	Nobody	Something	Several	
Either	No one			

Examples:

Some of the movie was hilarious.
movie = singular, so verb is singular

Some of the actors in the movie were hilarious.
actors = plural, so verb is plural

Most of the vote is in by seven o'clock on election day.

Most of the votes are in by seven o'clock on election day.

In each sentence, circle the correct form of the verb or verb phrase from the choices in parentheses.

- Everybody living in Suwanee (goes, go) to North Gwinnett High School.
- All of our clothes (is, are) still unpacked.
- None of the people in the theater (was, were) pleased with the movie.
- Every one of these jeans (is, are) too small.
- All of the fruit (has spoiled, have spoiled).
- No one (knows, know) the origin of the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets in Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*.
- Most of the program (was, were) new to me.
- (Is, Are) any of the bacon left?
- Some of the cotton material imported from Italy (was, were) used for her wedding dress.
- Somebody in the alto section of the chorus (sing, sings) slightly off-key.
- I wondered if all of the cupcakes that Barbara baked last night (was, were) gone.
- Most of the programs (was, were) new to me.
- Each of these bags (has been examined, have been examined).
- (Is, Are) any of the men going by plane?
- We needed a ball but none (was, were) available.

Lesson Eight: Measurements, Fractions and Percentages

Concept: Expressions of measurement (length, weight, capacity, and area) are usually _____. A fraction or a percentage is singular when it refers to a _____ word and is plural when it refers to a _____ word.

Examples:

Sixteen by twenty feet is the size of my master bedroom. {measurement = singular}

Two thirds of a cup of flour is needed for this recipe.
{cup = singular, so the verb is singular}

Seven percent of our salaries go toward retirement.
{salaries = plural, so the verb is plural}

In each sentence, circle the correct form of the verb or verb phrase from the choices in parentheses.

1. Seventy percent of the money (was spent, were spent) on clothes.
2. Thirty percent of the clothes (was, were) formal dresses.
3. Half of the letters (has been mailed, have been mailed).
4. Two thirds of the stock (remains, remain) unsold.
5. Six feet (is, are) the amount of wire we need.

Lesson Nine: Subjunctive Mood Verbs

Concept: In addition to tense and voice, verbs have another property which is called mood.

Indicative Mood = statements

Imperative Mood = commands/requests

→ The **subjunctive mood** is used to express a _____, a condition which is _____ to fact, or a condition of _____.

Examples:

*If he **were** here, I would give him the keys to my car. (contrary to fact)*

*I wish I **were** in California. (wish)*

*If this plan **were** to fail, we shall give up the project. (uncertainty – rarely used)*

- Be in present tense is **be**.
- Be in past tense is ALWAYS **were**, regardless of subject

Underline the verbs that are in the subjunctive mood. Then give the reason for the use of the subjunctive mood verb: wish, contrary to fact, or condition of uncertainty.

1. If she were honest, she would return the scarf.
2. If Robert were older, he would join the Navy.
3. She wishes she were taller.
4. If she were impatient, she would not be suited for this work.

Lesson Ten: Special Cases of Agreement

Singular subjects that are preceded by _____ or _____ and joined by _____ require a *singular verb*.

Examples: *Every ~~cat and dog~~ in the county has to be vaccinated.*

Vs. *Cats and dogs have to be vaccinated.*

Each ~~fork and spoon~~ has to be polished.

Vs. *Forks and spoons have to be polished.*

Every ~~man, woman, and child~~ was examined.

Vs. *Men, women, and children were examined*

However, placing *each* _____ a plural subject does not affect the form of the verb. The verb should agree with the plural subject.

Example: Colleges and vocational schools *each* have their advantages.

***Titles of books and other works of art can be misleading if they sound plural or consist of many words. A title is singular and must have a singular verb.**

Review One

1. The setting of the catacombs (contributes, contribute) to the horror of the story.
2. In chess each of the players (has have) eight identical men, called “pawns,” in his or her set.
3. The class (has, have) finished their reports.
4. Neither Mrs. Kokoros nor her children (speaks, speak) much Greek.
5. Stephen wishes he (was, were) more athletic.

Review Two

1. A falconer, a person who works with hawks, (is, are) now an uncommon sight.
2. This painting, just like that one, (costs, cost) far less.
3. If this (was, were) gold, it would be worth a fortune.
4. Every suitcase and parcel (was, were) inspected at the gate.
5. Only those puppies from the litter that (exhibits, exhibit) aggressive behavior will be trained guard dogs.

Review Three

1. If I (was, were) you, I would not tell her.
2. My favorite dessert (is, are) peaches with cream.
3. Somebody (is, are) responsible for the accident.
4. Chocolate chip cookies (is, are) one of my weaknesses.
5. Mumps (is, are) a serious illness.

Review Four

1. Gymnastics (is, are) growing in popularity.
2. Three cups of sugar (is, are) too much for that recipe.
3. Either of the twins (is, are) a capable sitter.
4. Several of my classmates (has, have) cars.
5. Some of the cheese (is, are) spoiled.

Review Five

1. Every man, woman, and child (is, are) expected to report.
2. The class (has, have) chosen its officers.
3. I wish that this (was, were) the first day of vacation, not the last.
4. Most of the lawn (has, have) dandelions covering it.
5. The news of his death (was, were) a surprise to everyone.

Review Six

1. Twelve inches (is, are) the proper length.
2. The number of the candidates (is, are) small.
3. A pair of pliers (was, were) left on the ground.
4. Neither of the men (has, have) paid his dues this year.
5. The vice-president and treasurer (has, have) made several recommendations.
6. The use of these new devices (has, have) reduced our expenses.