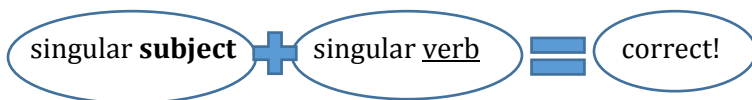


SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

The Basics

Subjects and **verbs** must **AGREE** with one another in **NUMBER**. Thus, if a subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if a subject is plural, its verb must also be plural.

The **dog** loves people.



The **dogs** love people.



Tip: To determine whether a verb is singular or plural, ask which form of the verb you would use after the subject **it** and which form you would use with the subject **they**.

- Singular examples: **it** eats, sleeps, wishes, has run, has loved, is dreaming
- Plural examples: **they** eat, sleep, wish, have run, have loved, are dreaming

Tip: Although a noun that ends in an **s** is usually plural, a verb that ends in an **s** is usually singular (a third-person singular verb in the present tense, to be precise: Jill loves hiking.).

The Rules...

1. A subject and a verb must agree, even when other words or phrases come between them.
EXAMPLE: The **flock** of geese is flying south for the winter.
 - The subject is *flock*, so the verb should be *is flying*.
 - Ignore the prepositional phrase *of geese* when determining verb number. In fact, *always ignore the nouns in prepositional phrases* in determining verb number.
2. Subjects joined by **and** usually take a plural verb.
EXAMPLE: **Dave and Bree** like to go to the movies.
 - *Exception:* For phrases like **each girl and boy** or **every cat and bird**, where the subjects are considered individually, use a singular verb.
EXAMPLE: Each **actor and actress** has a line in the play.

3. Collective nouns (e.g. *class, family, jury, herd*) can either be singular or plural depending on the context of the sentence.
 - If the context of the sentence makes you visualize the group doing something together, *as one unit*, then the noun is singular and takes a singular verb.
EXAMPLE: The **group** agrees that new curtains would improve the space.
 - If you visualize different members of the group performing *different actions*, then the noun is plural and takes a plural verb.
EXAMPLE: The old **group** have gone their separate ways.
4. The indefinite pronouns **all, any, more, most, none**, and **some** can be either singular or plural, depending on whether the word they refer to is singular or plural.
 - EXAMPLE: **All** of the cupcake **batter** gets poured into a greased pan.
(Here, *all* refers to *batter*, which is singular.)
 - EXAMPLE: **All** of the **cupcakes** are topped with cream cheese frosting.
(Here, *all* refers to *cupcakes*, which is plural.)
5. The indefinite pronouns **each, either, every, much**, and **neither** require singular verbs.
 - EXAMPLE: **Each** of us has enormous potential to succeed in life.
6. The indefinite pronouns **both, few, many**, and **several** take plural verbs.
 - EXAMPLE: **Both** of us have enormous potential to succeed in life.
7. The verb must agree with its subject even when the subject follows the verb.
 - Questions, sentences beginning with **here** or **there**, and sometimes sentences beginning with a prepositional phrase place the subject *after* the verb.
 - EXAMPLE: Here are my car **keys**.
 - EXAMPLE: Where is your uncle's **house**?
 - EXAMPLE: Out of the boat jumped the **fish**.
8. Subjects that look plural—because they end in *s*—but refer to only one thing are singular.
 - EXAMPLE: **Economics** is Cody's favorite subject.
9. Some nouns (such as *glasses, pliers, scissors*, and *trousers*) are plural but take a singular verb when preceded by the phrase *pair of*. *Pair* becomes the subject of the verb.
 - EXAMPLE: My **trousers** require tailoring.
 - EXAMPLE: This **pair** of trousers requires tailoring.
10. With subjects joined by **or** or **nor**, the verb should agree with the subject closer to it.
 - EXAMPLE: **Neither the teachers nor the principal** likes the new budget cuts.
 - EXAMPLE: **Either Tammy or her brothers** clean the family room every week.
11. Some nouns originating in Greek words can be treated as either singular or plural (*media, data*), but some cannot (singular: *criterion*, plural: *criteria*).