

Subject-Verb Agreement

Read the following sentences and try to understand what is being talked about:

- The sweater and skirt **have** their own hangers.
- *Each* sweater and *each* skirt **has** its own hanger.
- The sweater and skirt each **have** their own hanger.
- The leader of the men who **are** tired is unwilling to rest.
- The problem **is** the mice.
- The mice **are** the problem.



There seems to be something fishy about these sentences, right? May be, you can't just put a finger on it but something feels wrong. **BUT** all the above sentences are **GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT**.

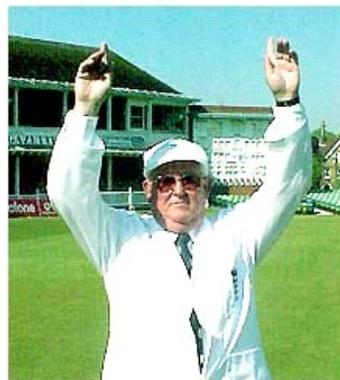
Welcome to the most innocuous yet the most error-prone area of English grammar. Let us call it SVA, short for subject-verb agreement. These are essentially errors that result when you try to match a singular noun with a plural verb or vice versa.

Make your verb agree with your subject

A verb must agree with its subject, not with any additive phrase in the sentence such as a prepositional or verbal phrase.

Don't let all the clutter confuse you. Look for the subject, look for the verb and make sure they agree.

1. Your **copy** of these rules **is** on the desk. (*Don't let the plural "rules" right before "is" mislead you. Here the subject is "copy" and "is" agrees with it.*)
2. The video will not be available until the **dispute** over video rights **is** settled. (*Ignore everything between "dispute" and "is" and just make sure they agree with each other.*)
3. Ms. Hema's **record** of community service, outstanding teaching ability and thorough involvement with the university **qualifies** for her promotion. (*The "record" "qualifies" her; don't let everything else between the subject and the verb confuse you.*)



So, eliminate the middlemen, and you can hit a SIX.

WATCH OUT!			
	Common errors	The correct form	Why? (The theory)
1	At the end of the Dusshera holidays comes the best sales .	At the end of the Dusshera holidays come the best sales .	In an inverted sentence beginning with a prepositional phrase, the verb still agrees with its subject.
2	The problem are taxes.	The problem is taxes.	
3	Under the house is some old jars .	Under the house are some old jars .	
4	Somebody in Detroit love me.	Somebody in Detroit loves me.	Indefinite pronouns such as <i>each, either, neither, one, everyone, everybody, and everything</i> are always singular. Eek!!
5	Neither of my parents have a formal education.	Neither of my parents has a formal education.	
6	Either are fine with me.	Either is fine with me.	
7	Both of my sisters has decided to live off campus.	Both of my sisters have decided to live off campus.	
8	Few seeks the enlightenment of higher education.	Few seek the enlightenment of higher education.	
9	A few of the members disagrees with the proposal.	A few of the members disagree with the proposal.	Indefinite pronouns such as <i>several, few, both, and many</i> are always plural. Pooh!! 
10	Only a handful of the protesters remains .	Only a handful of the protesters remain .	

May be singular, may be plural

Indefinite pronouns such as "some", "any", "none", "all" and "most" (SANAM) may be singular or plural depending what they refer to.

- Some** of the food **is** cold.
- Some** of the vegetables **are** cold.
- Some** of the students **are** late for class.
- All** she wants **is** to be happy.
- All** her dreams **have** come true.
- Any** friend of yours **is** a friend of mine.
- Any** friends he had **were** few and far between.
- Some** of the meat **is** raw.
- I can think of **some** remarks in retort, but **none seem** appropriate.

With "none" we use the plural or singular form according to whether it is one or many things that we're referring to.

- None** of the girls **is** married.
- None** of the children **is** as sweet as Mary Ann.
- None** of the criminals **have** been arrested.

Fractions such as "one-half" and "one-third" may be singular or plural depending on what they refer to.

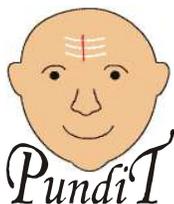
- Half** of the mail **has** been opened.
- Half** of the letters **have** been read.

Subjects joined by "and" take a plural verb unless the subjects are thought to be one item or unit.

BUT, if two nouns point to only one person or thing, they take a singular verb.

1. Jai and Veeru are radio jockeys.
2. Incorrect: **Jai and Veeru** each is **applying for the position**.
Correct: Jai and Veeru **each are** applying for the position.
3. *Guns and Roses* **is** my favourite rock group.
4. Chicken and dumplings **is** my favourite holiday dish.
5. A psychiatric *analysis and examination* **has** been done.
6. The great *poet and scholar* **is** dead.
7. My *friend and benefactor* **has** come.
8. *Bread and butter* **makes** a good breakfast. (Taken together)
9. *Slow and steady* **wins** the race.
10. *Early to bed and early to rise* **makes** a man healthy, wealthy and wise.

One man, two roles



Remember that when two nouns point to only one person or thing, article "the" is used **only once** with the first noun:

The Chief Engineer and Manager of the factory **has** agreed. (One person holding two positions.)

If "the" is used before each noun separately, this would mean two persons or things, and in that case the plural verb should be used.

The Chief Engineer and the Manager of the factory **have** agreed. (Two different persons.)

WATCH OUT!			
	Common errors	The correct form	Why? (The theory)
1	Either the teacher or the <i>students</i> is responsible.	Either the teacher or the <i>students</i> are responsible.	In cases where the subjects are joined by "or", "nor", "either . . . or", or "neither . . . nor", the verb must agree with the subject closer to it. Bingo!!
2	Neither the students nor the <i>teacher</i> are responsible.	Neither the students nor the <i>teacher</i> is responsible.	
3	Is either my <i>brothers</i> or my father responsible?	Are either my <i>brothers</i> or my father responsible?	
4	Are either my <i>father</i> or my brothers responsible?	Is either my <i>father</i> or my brothers responsible?	
5	She is one of the <i>girls</i> who cheers on Friday nights.	She is one of the <i>girls</i> who cheer on Friday nights.	Relative pronouns, such as "who", "which" or "that", which refer to plural antecedents require plural verbs. However, when the relative pronoun refers to a single subject, the pronoun takes a singular verb.
6	She is the only one of the cheerleaders who have a broken leg.	She is the only one of the cheerleaders who has a broken leg.	
7	They each is applying for the position.	They each are applying for the position.	Subjects preceded by "every", "each", and "many a" are singular. Yippee!! 
8	<i>Every</i> man, woman, and child were given a life preserver.	<i>Every</i> man, woman, and child was given a life preserver.	
9	<i>Many a</i> tear have to fall, but it's all in the game.	<i>Many a</i> tear has to fall, but it's all in the game.	
10	<i>Each</i> of the students work after school.	<i>Each</i> of the students works after school.	

When many come together

A collective noun, such as "audience", "faculty" or "jury", requires a singular verb when the group is regarded as a whole and a plural verb when the members of the group are regarded as individuals.

With collective nouns, the usage depends on the sense. If the collective noun represents a whole group or a body (institution), it takes a singular verb. But, if the collective noun represents a part or parts or divisions of a body, it takes a plural verb.

These are some of the commonly used collective nouns: **Government, parliament, assembly, council, committee, army, crew, staff, jury, fleet, crowd, administration, audience, class, crowd, faculty, orchestra, team, majority, mob**, etc.

1. The committee **has** *agreed* on this issue. (The verb is singular because there is no division in the committee.)
2. The committee **are** *divided* on this issue. (Here the verb is plural because the committee is divided.)
3. The crew **is** well trained. (Here the verb is singular because the "crew" represents one undivided group.)
4. The crew **were** taken prisoners. (Here the verb is plural because the members of the crew have to be taken prisoners separately.)
5. The Parliament **has** elected its Speaker.
6. The military **were** deployed over the troubled area.
7. The fleet **has** touched the shore.
8. The government **has** decided to introduce the Bill.
9. The assembly **is** in session.
10. The mob **has** dispersed.
11. The mob **have** started throwing stones.
12. The jury **has** come to a unanimous verdict.
13. The jury **are** divided in opinion.
14. The jury **has** made its decision.
15. The *faculty* **are** preparing their presentations.
16. The group of bizarrely dressed youths **is** taking over the cafeteria.
17. The Kapoor family **is** going on vacation this year.
18. The Kapoor family **are** going to fight all the way through their vacation.
19. A *herd* of elephants **was** charging towards us.
20. The *class* **is** very noisy today.
21. My football *team* **is** doing really well.
22. **The bag of shopping was** too heavy to carry. (Bag of shopping = singular subject. Lots of shopping, but there's only one bag).



"People", in the sense of "group of persons", is always used in the plural number. But when "people" is used in the sense of a "nation", it can be used both as singular (a people) and as plural (collectively referring to people hailing from different nations).

1. The **peoples** of India and China are hardworking.
2. We Indians are an emotional **people**.

Subjects preceded by "the number of" or "the percentage of" are singular, while subjects preceded by "a number of" or "a percentage of" are plural.

The same rule applies to some other phrases of indefinite number like *many of, a handful of, the rest of, half of, a quarter of, some of, most of, majority of, minority of, part of, percent of, none of, all of, a few of, etc.*

1. A number of children **are** playing.
2. A number of students **are** absent.
3. The number of students **is** going down.
4. The number of graduates **is** increasing.
5. The number of guests **varies**.
6. A large percentage of the vacationers **are** senior citizens.

Some nouns such as *deer, shrimp* and *sheep* have the same spelling for both their singular and plural forms.

In these cases, the meaning of the sentence will determine whether they are singular or plural.

1. *Deer* **are** beautiful animals.
2. *The spotted deer* **is** licking the sugar cube.

Always singular

Titles of books, companies, brand names, and groups are singular.

1. *Great Expectations* **is** my favourite novel.
2. *Cats* **is** my favourite musical.
3. *The Untouchables* **was** a very violent movie.
4. *The X-files* **is** re-screening this evening.
5. **Is** "dinosaurs" spelt dinosuars or dinosaurs?

"Words" used as "words", not as "grammatical parts" of the sentence, require singular verbs.

1. "Can't" **is** the contraction for *cannot*.
2. "Cats" **is** the plural form of *cat*.

Some nouns are always used in the singular number — poetry, scenery, machinery, stationery, crockery, luggage, baggage, postage, knowledge, breakage, jewellery, information, furniture, money and wastage.

1. Kashmir is famous for its colourful scenery. (Not **sceneries**)
2. It is an anthology of poetry. (Not **poetries**)
3. He has imported all his machinery from Germany. (Not **machineries**)
4. The laboratory equipment is made of glass. (Not **equipments**)
5. I have no information from him. (Not **informations**)

Note — If it is necessary to indicate the singular or plural form of these nouns we place "a piece (or pieces) of", "an item(s) of", "an article(s) of" etc. before the noun, without changing the form of the noun.

1. I have **a piece of information** for you.
2. This **item of your furniture** is really beautiful.
3. I don't like this **article of jewellery**.
4. **All kinds of furniture** are available here.
5. I want only **a few articles of stationery**.
6. The **pieces of equipment** were found damaged.

A verbal noun (infinitive or gerund) serving as a subject is treated as singular, even if the object of the verbal phrase is plural.

1. *Hiding* your mistakes **does** not make them go away.
2. *To run* five miles **is** my goal.

A noun phrase or clause acting as the subject of a sentence requires a singular verb.

1. *What I need* **is** to be loved.
2. *Whether there is any connection between the two events* **is** unknown.
3. *The best thing about birthdays* **is** the presents.

Some nouns like measles, news, physics, politics, mathematics, mechanics, summons, gallows, calculus, innings etc., which appear plural in form, are actually singular in number.

1. Politics **is** not an easy game.
2. A summons **has** come from the court.
3. A gallows **is** made of wood or iron.
4. Mathematics **is** a difficult subject.
5. The news **is** correct.
6. Their first innings **was** disappointing.
7. Measles **is** a dreadful disease.
8. Calculus **requires** great skill in algebra.
9. Politics **has** lost its moral character.

Some nouns ending in -ics, such as economics and ethics, take singular verbs when they refer to principles, a system or a field of study; however, when they refer to individual practices or applications, they usually take plural verbs.

1. *Ethics* **is** being taught in the spring.
2. *His unusual business ethics* **get** him into trouble.
3. *Economics* **is** an interesting subject.
4. The *economics* of your project **are** all wrong.
5. *Statistics* **is** taught at B-schools.
6. No *statistics* **are** available on calls-to-conversions ratio.

Phew!

When adjectives of quantity (like much, more, little, less, lots, etc.) are used as subjects, they take a singular verb.

1. **Much has** already been done.
2. **Little has** been done so far.
3. **Much more is** still needed.
4. **Much less was** expected.
5. **Lots is** still needed.

Always plural

Some words ending in -s refer to a single thing but are nonetheless plural and require a plural verb. (Also refer to "Singular in pair" below.)

These include: Alms, thanks, riches, caves, species, scissors, trousers, pants, clippers, tongs, bellows, gallows, fangs, measles, eyeglasses, goggles, amends, annals, archives, ashes, arrears, athletics, auspices, belongings, breeches, bowels, braces, binoculars, billiards, customs, congratulations, dregs, earnings, entrails, embers, fetters, fireworks, lodgings, lees, mumps, odds, outskirts, particulars, proceeds, proceedings, regards, remains, savings, shambles, shears, spectacles, surroundings, tidings, troops, tactics, vegetables, valuables, wages, works, innings, etc.

1. His **trousers** are dirty.
2. What are your monthly **earnings**?
3. My assets **were** wiped out in the depression.
4. The average worker's earnings **have** gone up dramatically.
5. Our thanks **go** to the workers who supported the union.
6. He gave him **alms**.
7. He lives on the **outskirts** of the town.



Some nouns are singular in form but plural in use, always taking a plural verb.

Examples: Cattle, gentry, clergy, cavalry, infantry, nobility, poultry, peasantry, children, admiralty, yeomanry, etc.

Note: Family is used both as singular and as plural depending on the context.

1. The **cattle are** grazing in the field.
2. The **peasantry are** very happy.
3. Our **cavalry are** very strong.

Unusual forms

Certain nouns of Latin and Greek origin have unusual singular and plural forms.

Examples (plural in brackets): Criterion (criteria), alumnus (alumni), datum (data), medium (media).

1. The *data* **are** available for inspection.
2. The only *criterion* for membership **is** a high GPA.

Singular in pair

Sometimes nouns take weird forms and can fool us into thinking they're plural when they're really singular and vice-versa. Words such as **trousers, glasses, pants, spectacles, jeans, shears, tongs, pliers, and scissors** are regarded as plural (and require plural verbs) unless they're preceded by **pair of** (in which case the word *pair* becomes the subject).

1. Your trousers **are** dirty.
2. Your scissors **are** blunt.
3. The tongs **are** missing.
4. Where **are** your spectacles?
5. A pair of trousers **is** ready for you.
6. A pair of scissors **is** on the table.
7. My glasses **were** on the bed.
8. My pants **were** torn.
9. A pair of plaid trousers **is** in the closet.

Of numbers and measures

Mathematical expressions of *subtraction and division* require singular verbs, while expressions of ***addition or multiplication*** take either singular or plural verbs but it is best to stick to singular.

1. Ten *divided* by two **equals** five.
2. Five *times* seven **equals** thirty-five.
3. Two plus two **is** four (preferred).
4. Two plus two **are** four (also correct but not preferred).

Nouns expressing time, distance, weight, and measurement are singular when they refer to a unit and plural when they refer to separate items.

1. *Fifty yards* **is** a short distance.
2. *Ten years* **have** passed since I finished college.
3. Two hundred bottles of wine **is** plenty.
4. One hundred dollars **is** too much to spend on a pair of sneakers!
5. Nine out of ten dentists **recommend** the new toothpaste.

Some nouns after definite numeral adjectives are always used in the singular number. But if the numeral adjective is indefinite, the nouns will be used in the plural number.

Examples: Pair, dozen, score, gross, stone, hundred, thousand, million, billion, etc.

1. He bought two **pair** of shoes (**not two pairs** of shoes).
2. He bought **four dozen** pencils.
3. He **is three score** and ten (means seventy).
4. I have **five thousand** rupees.
5. The city has **ten million** people.
6. He bought **dozens** of pencils.
7. **Millions of people** had to suffer as the gas leak went undetected for hours.



If a compound word is formed by joining a definite numeral adjective and a noun (by a hyphen), the noun so used will always be in the singular number.

1. Here is a **five-rupee** note.
2. Please lend me a **ten-rupee** note.
3. He gave me a **hundred-rupee** note.
4. This is included in our **five-year** plan.
5. He fell down from a **ten-foot** high wall.
6. A **three-man** enquiry committee has been set up.
7. There was a **twenty-foot** deep ditch.
8. A **five-judge** bench will hear this case.

If a numeral adjective and a fraction (a half, a quarter, three quarters, etc.) are to be used with a noun, the sentence must be carefully structured.

Noun should be used after the numeral adjective, and the number of the noun is singular or plural according to the numeral adjective. The fractions should be used after the noun.

Incorrect	Correct
The train is late by one and a half hours .	The train is late by one hour and a half .
I have one and a half rupees .	I have one rupee and a half .
I have read five and a half chapters .	I have read five chapters and a half .
The distance is four and three quarters kilometres .	The distance is four kilometres and three quarters .
Its weight is one and a half kilo .	Its weight is a kilo and a half .

BUT, if a numeral adjective and a fraction are joined by **and**, and they are used in the sense of multiplication, the noun is placed after them, and is always plural.

Incorrect	Correct
The amount will grow one time and a half .	The amount will grow one and a half times .
The amount will grow two times and a half .	The amount will grow two and a half times .

Singular, and also plural

“Wages” may be singular or plural.

1. The wages of sin **is** death ('wages' is singular in only this sense)
2. The wages **are** not so low these days.

A plural subject followed by a singular appositive requires a plural verb. Similarly, a singular subject followed by a plural appositive requires a singular verb.

1. When the girls throw a party, *they* each **bring** a gift.
2. The *board*, all ten members, **is** meeting today.

Same singular and plural

Some nouns remain the same in both singular and plural numbers and are used in the same form.

Examples: Swine, vermin, mankind, police, public, etc.

1. The **police has** been informed.
3. **Swine are** dirty animals.



2. The **police have** taken action.
4. You are **a dirty swine**.

Agree positively

If the sentence compounds a positive and a negative subject and one is plural, and the other singular, the verb should agree with the positive subject.

1. The department members but not the chair **have** decided not to teach on Valentine's Day.
2. It is not the faculty members but the president who **decides** this issue.
3. It was the speaker, not his ideas, that **has** provoked the students to riot.

WATCH OUT!			
	Common errors	The correct form	Why? (The theory)
1	A dozen was injured.	A dozen were injured.	Some nouns (like dozen, score, million, hundred, thousand, people and cattle) appear to be singular in form, but they are actually plural in meaning and sense and take a plural verb.
2	The cattle is grazing.	The cattle are grazing.	
3	The people is satisfied.	The people are satisfied.	
4	Ship after ship arrive at the port.	Ship after ship arrives at the port.	If the same noun is repeated before and after a preposition, the noun is used in the singular each time, and the verb is also used in the singular number.
5	Chance after chance were lost.	Chance after chance was lost.	
6	I , who is your friend, should help you.	I , who am your friend, should help you.	If the subject of a verb is a relative pronoun (who, whom, whose, which, that) the verb depends on the number and person of the antecedent (noun or pronoun used before it).
7	You , my servant, is not loyal to me.	You , my servant, are not loyal to me.	
8	The poor is honest.	The poor are honest.	Certain adjectives when joined with "the" become plural nouns, and take a verb in the plural number. Examples: Poor, rich, humble, blind, honest, dumb, lame, crippled etc.
9	The dumb does not speak.	The dumb do not speak.	
10	Shakespeare was very popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.	Shakespeare was very popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.	If two or more adjectives are connected with "and", and if an article has been used only before the first adjective, the noun used after the adjectives will be in the plural number. But if the article is used before each adjective, the noun will be singular.
11	Shakespeare was very popular in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.	Shakespeare was very popular in the sixteenth and the seventeenth century.	

Common gender

Some nouns and pronouns are of common gender or are said to have dual gender as these may be used as masculine or feminine.

Examples: Child, baby, friend, student, teacher, lecturer, professor, pupil, artist, author, reader, servant, worker, poet, speaker, writer, typist, engineer, lawyer, advocate, client, clerk, conductor, musician, politician, minister, leader, dealer, secretary, enemy, parent, relation, cousin, orphan, neighbour, person, president, monarch, etc.

Nouns of common gender that end in "-man" should not be used with feminine gender pronouns. In such cases, "-man" should be replaced by "-person".

Use chairperson, spokesperson, sportsperson, mediaperson, etc. instead of chairman, spokesman, sportswoman, mediaman, etc.

A difficulty arises when the pronoun to be used with a common gender noun is in the singular number.

1. Every teacher should do **his** duty.
2. Every teacher should do **her** duty.

The grammatically correct (but politically incorrect or sexist) way is to use the masculine gender.

1. Every teacher should do **his** duty.
2. No student should waste **his** time.

A politically correct but clumsy way to restructure this is: Every teacher should do **his** or **her** duty.

A more accepted, politically correct version (which is, however, grammatically incorrect), is:

Every teacher should do **their** duty.

The best solution is to reconstruct the sentence: Teachers should do **their** duty.

Let us look at some more examples, where a little restructuring helps us breathe easy.



Problematic	Better
Before the audition, each actor must submit his or her photograph.	Before the audition, each actor must submit a photograph. <i>(It's obvious the producers don't want a picture of the family dog.)</i>
Each doctor felt rewarded for his participation in the clinic.	The doctors felt rewarded for their participation in the clinic.
The student can depend on peer tutors to help solve his/her writing problems.	The student can depend on peer tutors to help solve writing problems.
If a motorist calls for help, she must pay for the call. <i>(This is a little sexist.)</i>	A motorist who calls for help must pay for the call.
Every customer deserves the most courteous service we can give him .	Every customer deserves our most courteous service.
Always do your best for the patient , no matter how cranky s/he is.	Always do your best for the patient, not matter how cranky the patient is. <i>(There is some repetition, but the meaning is very clear.)</i>

Exceptions to the Subject-Verb Agreement rules *Why??*

By now, you know the common SVA rule: A singular subject takes a singular verb and a plural subject takes a plural verb.

What makes grammar so exciting is that there are exceptions to almost every rule!

Here are the **exceptions** to this general SVA rule:

Exception 1: Dare not, need not

These are two typical verbs used in **negative sentences**. These are used in the plural form even with singular subjects. The third person singular is **"need"**, and not **"needs"** just as **"dare"** is used for **"dares"** provided it is followed by a negative.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. He dare not oppose me. (<i>Not dares</i>) | 2. He need not work hard. (<i>Not needs</i>) |
| 3. She need not see a doctor. | 4. He needn't have gone to school on Sunday. |
| 5. He has got a car. He needn't have travelled by bus. | 6. He dare not slap her! |
| 7. She dare not go out. | 8. Need he go there? |
| 9. Need he try again? | 10. Dare he speak before you? |
| 11. Dare he repeat the mistake? | 12. They dare not oppose me. |
| 13. He need not go. | 14. He need never fear me. |
| 15. He need hardly take my help. | 16. He need scarcely demand any more help. |
| 17. He needn't smoke or drink at the party. | 18. He dare hardly speak before me. |
| 19. He daren't come before me. | 20. He daren't have gone alone in the deep woods. |

Note—If **"dare"** and **"need"** are used in the affirmative sense (without **"not"**) they take the plural form with the plural subject and singular form with the singular subject.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. He needs a pen. | 2. They need food. |
| 3. She doesn't need a pen? | 4. Does he need to go there? |
| 5. He dares me to climb the peak. | 6. Does he dare to challenge you? |
| 7. Will the girls dare to walk in the dark? | |

Exception 2: Verbs of supposition, in subjunctive mood

A plural verb is used with singular subjects in sentences expressing mere imagination or impossible hope, wish or condition.

1. If I **were** a bird.
2. **Were** I a king.
3. How I wish she **were** here.
4. If I **were** you, I would do it.
5. He behaved as if he **were** our master.
6. I wish I **were** a rich man. (But I'm not.)
7. If I **were** you, I wouldn't do that. (But I'm not you).
8. Airlines insist that each passenger **pass** through a metal detector. (*Not passes*)
9. It's extremely important that silicon chips **be made** (*Not are made*) in a dust-free environment.
10. Alexander the Great said, "If I **were** not Alexander, I would want to be Diogenes."
11. The student would score more if he **studied**. (*Not if he studies*)
12. She could be the leader if she **ran** for the office. (*Not runs*)



Verbs in subjunctive mood can be tricky. Let us look at more examples so that they are very clear.



Incorrect	Correct
The Supreme Court <i>decreed</i> that the Centre will take charge of the situation.	The Supreme Court <i>decreed</i> that the Centre take charge of the situation.
He wishes the train moves faster.	He wishes the train moved faster. (<i>Here there is no possibility of the train moving faster.</i>)
If I was the prime minister, I would eradicate corruption.	If I were the prime minister, I would eradicate corruption.
I wish it was earlier.	I wish it were earlier.
Suppose he speeds up suddenly.	Suppose he were to speed up suddenly.
If the college lowers its tuition fee, I would probably enrol.	Should the college lower its tuition fee, I <i>would</i> probably enrol. OR If the college lowered its tuition fee, I would probably enrol.
If he drives slower, he will recognise the landmarks from now on.	If he drove slower, he would recognise the landmarks from now on.
Ann suggested we should go to the Chinese restaurant.	Ann suggested that we go to the Chinese restaurant.
I insist you to be quiet.	I insist that you be quiet.
The supervisor preferred all workers to wear uniforms from now on.	The supervisor <i>preferred that</i> all workers wear uniforms from now on.
It is time you should realise your responsibility.	It is time you realised your responsibility.
I would rather you learn English.	I would rather you learnt English.

Exception 3: Verbs of wish or blessing

In sentences expressing deep and sharp wish, blessing or hope, plural verb is used with singular subjects. In these sentences, the verb is used in the subjunctive mood. This use is now rare.

1. Long live the King!
2. God save the King!
3. Long live our friendship!

Noun errors

Noun errors may seem elementary but can really vixen (oops! that should be fox) you unless you are watchful. Study these examples and sharpen your clause (oops again!).

Incorrect	Correct
R Shakuntala, the custom official, virtually put an end to smuggling.	R Shakuntala, the customs official, virtually put an end to smuggling.
Shakuni was an expert in the game of dies .	Shakuni was an expert in the game of dice .
Force was brought in to curb the militant activities.	Forces were brought in to curb the militant activities.
Inventions are made by genii .	Inventions are made by geniuses .
The Queen's of England reaction was important in the Diana episode.	The Queen of England's reaction was important in the Diana episode.
I am going to Stephen Hawking's the scientist's country.	I am going to Stephen Hawking the scientist's country.
The audience listened to Javed and Vajpayee's poems.	The audience listened to Javed's and Vajpayee's poems.
The cart's wheel was broken.	The wheel of the cart was broken.
If you are the favourite of the Fortune, you might escape suffering while others suffer.	If you are Fortune's favourite , you might escape suffering while others suffer.
His house is at the throw of a stone from here.	His house is at a stone's throw from here.
He wears glass to aid his short-sighted eyes.	He wears glasses to aid his short-sighted eyes.
Take care of the vixen as they are wily creatures.	Take care of the foxes as they are wily creatures. OR Take care of the vixen as she is a wily creature.
Who shall win if there is a contest between the dwarves and the giants?	Who shall win if there is a contest between the dwarfs and the giants?
The same board is used for chess as well as draught.	The same board is used for chess as well as draughts .
Children should not seek admissions to the elders' society.	Children should not seek admission to the elders' society.
The down-to-earth never forget the grounds on which they stand.	The down-to-earth never forget the ground on which they stand.
The law of indexes proves very helpful in algebraic calculations.	The law of indices proves very helpful in algebraic calculations.
The bright lamps gave much lights .	The bright lamps gave much light .
The practices of the lawyers vary from those of the doctors.	The practice of the lawyers <i>varies</i> from <i>that</i> of the doctors.
I spoke to Kumar Gaurav's the actor's secretary.	I spoke to Kumar Gaurav the actor's secretary.
There was no money in the bank in Maya's and Veena's joint account.	There was no money in the bank in Maya and Veena's joint account.
The cup's base was rounded.	The base of the cup was rounded.
You will be promoted in the time of a year .	You will be promoted in a year's time .
Mr. M is ready to make any sacrifice for the sake of justice .	Mr. M is ready to make any sacrifice for justice' sake .
Devendra Kaushik is Vishwanathan Anand of our chess circle.	Devendra Kaushik is the Vishwanathan Anand of our chess circle.
The fleet of ships move at a uniform speed.	The fleet of ships moves at a uniform speed.
Neelesh is Gandhiji of our class.	Neelesh is the Gandhiji of our class.
My friend brought two dozens eggs.	My friend bought two dozen eggs.
This cattle has been in trouble ever since the famine.	These cattle have been in trouble ever since the famine.
Cares of the old <i>are</i> necessary.	Care of the old <i>is</i> necessary.
A book is printed on papers .	A book is printed on paper .
The team members should listen to the advices given by the captain and the manager.	The team members should listen to the pieces of advice given by the captain and the manager.
She gives herself air whenever at a party.	She gives herself airs whenever at a party.
The cloths he wears are costly.	The clothes he wears are costly.
A realist sees a thing in its true colour .	A realist sees a thing in its true colours .
When you draw a circle, you use a compass .	When you draw a circle, you use compasses .

Subject-Verb Agreement revisited

Before we move on to the exercises, let us look at some more examples of SVA errors. Recapitulate and reinforce!

Incorrect	Correct
Among the constitutional rights we cherish are freedom.	Among the constitutional rights we cherish is freedom.
The group of protesters are blocking the entrance to the building.	The group of protesters is blocking the entrance to the building.
The annual rituals of the group confuses the neighbours.	The annual rituals of the group confuse the neighbours.
The quiz , as well as all workbook exercises, were collected.	The quiz , as well as all workbook exercises, was collected.
	<p><i>Phrases such as "as well as," "such as," "along with," "rather than," "with," "together with," "in addition to," "like," "and not", "no less than", "rather than", "more than", "unlike", "besides", "excluding", "accompanied by" and "including" introduce it</i></p>
The commander , with all his soldiers, were killed.	The commander , with all his soldiers, was killed.
The chief cashier , together with all his men, have been dismissed.	The chief cashier , together with all his men, has been dismissed.
He , as well as his friends, have failed.	He , as well as his friends, has failed.
Ram , like Mohan and Sohan, are fond of pictures.	Ram , like Mohan and Sohan, is fond of pictures.
A driver's license , together with two other pieces of identification, are required.	A driver's license , together with two other pieces of identification, is required.
The mayor as well as his brothers are going to prison.	The mayor as well as his brothers is going to prison.
The mayor and his brothers is going to jail.	The mayor and his brothers are going to jail.
The mayor , who has been convicted along with his four brothers on four counts of various crimes but who also seems, like a cat, to have several political lives, are finally going to jail.	The mayor , who has been convicted along with his four brothers on four counts of various crimes but who also seems, like a cat, to have several political lives, is finally going to jail.
His jacket , not his shirt or his socks, always seem to match his slacks.	His jacket , not his shirt or his socks, always seems to match his slacks.
Her birthday celebration , together with the upcoming holiday, make for a very full calendar.	Her birthday celebration , together with the upcoming holiday, makes for a very full calendar.
The war-torn country's only relief were the food and medical supplies dropped from the sky.	The war-torn country's only relief was the food and medical supplies dropped from the sky.
The explanation provided by the agency were farming practices, population growth and international aid.	The explanation provided by the agency was farming practices, population growth and international aid.
A mixture of materials were used to withstand high temperatures.	A mixture of materials was used to withstand high temperatures.
The woman who made those cakes are our next-door neighbour.	The woman who made those cakes is our next-door neighbour.
The president and vice president , accompanied by the board of directors, plans to vote against changing the company rules.	The president and vice president , accompanied by the board of directors, plan to vote against changing the company rules.

Exercises

Exercise # 01

1. The schedule of courses and classes often (bewilder/bewilders) new students.
2. Communication among family members (play/plays) a key role.
3. The parade of cars and horses (was/were) spectacular.
4. The news about the survivors (is/are) really bad.
5. Beyond the Alps (lie/lies) Italy.
6. The cost of new cars (is/are) dropping.
7. My severest critic and best friend (is/are) my wife.
8. Ham and eggs (is/are) a tasty dish.
9. The president of the First National Bank and leader of the scout troop (has/have) just started to speak.
10. None of the men (was/were) arrested.

Exercise # 02

1. Take two (spoonsful/spoonfuls) of your medicine every hour.
2. (This/These) data (is/are) interesting.
3. One and one (equals/equal) two.
4. Two plus two (is/are) four.
5. On the wall (was/were) several posters.
6. His favourite dessert (is/are) rasmalai.
7. One or two books (is/are) enough.
8. Two credit cards or a driver's license (is/are) required.
9. The book or the magazines (is/are) on the shelf.
10. What we need in this country (is/are) more honest politicians.

Exercise # 03

1. Five millilitres (seem/seems) to be an adequate amount of base to neutralise the acid.
2. Five years (is/are) the maximum sentence for that offence.
3. Ten rupees (is/are) a high price to pay.
4. A thousand bushels (is/are) a good yield.
5. Neither the President nor the members of the cabinet (is/are) behind the bill.
6. Neither the members of the cabinet nor the President (is/are) behind the bill.
7. Your blood pressure, as well as your temperature and heartbeat, (is/are) up today.
8. His income, like that of many small businessmen, (has/have) taken a terrific drop this year.
9. She is one of those (women/woman) who (runs/run) (her/their) husbands ragged.
10. All I want (is/are) friends and money.

Exercise # 04

1. The depletion of natural resources, in addition to the rapid increase in utilisation of these resources, (have/has) encouraged many nations to conserve energy.
2. A series of sightings of UFOs (has, have) turned the sleepy town into a tourist attraction.
3. It is good service that (makes, make) a restaurant great.
4. Economics (is/are) studied in most colleges.
5. The (alumni/alumnus/alumna/alumnae) of The College of New Rochelle are bright young women with good education.
6. (Those kinds of apples are / That kind of apple is) too sour.
7. Three-quarters of the work (is/are) done.
8. Two-thirds of the pupils (was/were) sick.
9. Either his sister or his parents (has/have) to see me.
10. George Bernard Shaw, as well as Mahatma Gandhi and River Phoenix, (was a vegetarian/were vegetarians).

Exercise # 05

1. She screamed as if she (was/were) being murdered.
2. If she (was not/were not/ had not been) so stupid, she (would understand/would have understood) how you feel about her.
3. If he (had gone/went) to the party, he (would have felt/ would feel) better.
4. If her husband (was/were/had been) at home that night, he would not (countenance/have countenanced) such shenanigans.
5. If I ever (became/will become/become) the CEO of the organisation, I (would/will) weed out the entire deadwood.
6. Each one of the children here (speak/speaks) fluent French.
7. Every possible cause and suspect (were/was) investigated.
8. One of the many (galaxy/galaxies) (was/were) proved to be near a black hole.
9. Everyone in the fraternity has (his/their/his or her) own set of prejudices.
10. Time and tide (wait/waits) for no one.

Exercise # 06

1. She (dare, dares) not come before me.
2. He (need, needs) not do it.
3. (Was, Were) he in England to see the coronation!
4. The commission (is / are) divided in their opinion on this issue.
5. The committee (has / have) arrived at a unanimous decision.
6. My spectacles (has/have) been broken.
7. Here (are/is) a pair of trousers for you.
8. (I, you and he/He, you and I) have been selected for scholarship.
9. Each boy and each man received (his/their) share in time.
10. The blind (need/needs) to get social recognition.

Exercise # 07

1. More games than one (is/are) lost for want of coordination.
2. Question after question (was/were) asked to me.
3. It (is/are) they who will help us.
4. My great disappointment (is/are) my repeated failures.
5. Not only I but also all my sons (are/am) ready to go.
6. Not only the strikers but also their leader (were/was) arrested.
7. Nothing but peak over peak (appear/appears) over there.
8. Our only guide (was/were) the teachers.
9. A (five-man/five-men) commission has been set up.
10. He jumped into a (forty-foot/forty-feet) deep well.

Exercise # 08

1. We should not be miserly in giving (alm/alms) to the beggars.
2. I have sent my (trouser/trousers) to the laundry.
3. He has built a house on the (outskirt/outskirts) of the city.
4. He immersed the (remain/remains) of his father in the Ganges.
5. He has lost all his (valuable/valuables).
6. Please accept my (congratulation/congratulations) for your success.
7. He sucked the liquor to the last (dreg/dregs).
8. The prisoner was kept in (fetter/fetters).
9. I have no liking for pastoral (poetry/poetries).
10. I have to purchase all kinds of (stationery/stationeries) for the school.

Exercise # 09

1. She is very fond of sparkling (jewellery/jewelleries).
2. I don't travel with heavy (luggage/luggages).
3. I receive all necessary (information/informations) from him.
4. Please show me all items of (crockery/crockeries).
5. The letter is short of (postage/postages).
6. Can you not reduce your (wastage/wastages)?
7. No news (is/are) good news.
8. Their performance in the first (inning/innings) was very poor.
9. Politics (is/are) the game of fortune hunters.
10. The Indian peasantry (is/are) still backward.

Exercise # 10

1. Our cavalry (is/are) highly trained.
2. The (gentry/gentries) have already arrived.
3. There is a large herd of (swine/swines).
4. All the (people/peoples) were happy.
5. I have several (pair/pairs) of shoes.
6. There are three (thousand/thousands) workers in this factory.
7. (Thousand/thousands) of workers are working in this factory.
8. I have four (pair/pairs) of shoes.
9. He is now three (scores/score) and ten.
10. (Scores/score) of houses have been gutted in fire.

Exercise # 11

1. He is rolling in (million/millions).
2. There is no absentee in the fifth and the sixth (classes/class).
3. There is no post-office in the first and second (lane/lanes).
4. Many great scientists were born in the eighteenth and nineteenth (century/centuries).
5. There is no mistake in the fourth and the fifth (page/pages).
6. No berth is available in the first and last (coach/coaches).
7. Apples sell at (ten and a half rupees/ten rupees and a half) a kilo.
8. He reached late by (one and a quarter hours/one hour and a quarter).
9. I have (two and quarter hours / two hours and a quarter) at my disposal.
10. He covered (twenty and a half kilometres / twenty kilometres and a half) in (one and a half hours / one hour and a half).

Exercise # 12

1. At this rate of interest your money will grow (two times and a half /two and a half times).
2. My income has risen (one time and a half/one and a half times).
3. The poor (deserve/deserves) all our sympathy.
4. The wounded (was/were) admitted in hospital.
5. The rich (is/are) not always merciless.
6. Every teacher should know (his/her/their/his or her) students.
7. I love to walk in the fresh morning (air/airs).
8. I shall spare no (pain/pains) in giving entire satisfaction to you.
9. Please submit your income-tax (return /returns) immediately.
10. This stool is made of (iron/irons).

Exercise # 13

1. I shall shift my entire household (effect/effects) from here.
2. I have booked my (good/goods) by passenger train.
3. He struck the ball with great (force/forces).
4. You have to pay your (custom/customs) duty.
5. He has gone to the (wood/woods) in search of his lost cattle.
6. He has built a small temple in the (premises /premise) of his new house.
7. Most men live to the age of three (score/scores) and ten.
8. I like the (scenery/sceneries) of this place.
9. My car cost me fifty (thousand/thousands) rupees.
10. Our score in the first (inning/innings) was very encouraging.

Exercise # 14

1. Pray and give (thank/thanks) to God that you have been saved.
2. There was a herd of (deer/deers) in the wood.
3. Their (offspring/offsprings) are all sickly.
4. Whose (cattle/cattles) are these?
5. Five (hundred/hundreds) years have passed since then.
6. The (tiding/tidings) came very late.
7. The (jury/juries) found him guilty.
8. (Dozen/Dozens) of men were injured.
9. I bought two (dozen/dozens) pencils.
10. He gave (alm/alms) to every beggar.

Exercise # 15

1. Where (is/are) the scissors?
2. The police (has/have) made no arrests.
3. Economics (is/are) taught by Dr. Jain.
4. The clergy (is/are) opposed to closing the church today.
5. A huge crowd (has/have) assembled.
6. No news (has/have) come from my brother.
7. Sheep blindly (follow/follows) the leader.
8. The jury (has/have) not come to a unanimous verdict.
9. Measles (is/are) a bad disease.
10. No cattle (is/are) allowed to graze here.

Exercise # 16

1. My family (is/are) early risers.
2. Three dozen pencils (has/have) been distributed.
3. The government (is/are) determined to implement the plan.
4. The majority of workers (has/have) come on duty.
5. The rich (is/are) not always happy.
6. I have bought a new (spectacle/pair of spectacles).
7. Have you installed new (machineries/machinery)?
8. Please pay my (regard/regards) to your father.
9. These poultry (is/are) mine.
10. You can select from these three (pair/pairs) of shoes.

Exercise # 17

1. So many (pair/pairs) of shoes are here before you.
2. I have all these points at (the ends of my fingers/my finger-ends).
3. He gets a monthly allowance of two (thousand/thousands) rupees.
4. His (hairs have/hair has) turned grey.
5. You must follow my (advice/advices).
6. I have not yet brought my (furniture/furnitures).
7. The news (is/are) not authentic.
8. He attended King (George's the Fifth/George the Fifth's) coronation ceremony.
9. The wages of sin (is/are) death.
10. His weekly (earning is/earnings are) very poor.

Exercise # 18

1. This is my (uncle's, the engineer/uncle, the engineer's) office.
2. (My pen's colour/The colour of my pen) is black.
3. A (three-men/ three-man) enquiry committee will look into the matter.
4. No more (informations/information) (is/are) available.
5. (My father's friend's son/The son of my father's friend) is coming today.
6. (A kite's wings/The wings of a kite) are large.
7. I have sent him my (congratulation/congratulations) for his success.
8. There was a (fifty-feet/fifty-foot) deep valley.
9. (Truck after truck/Trucks after trucks) crossed the prohibited line.
10. There is no light in the fifth and sixth (house/houses).

Exercise # 19

1. The police (has/have) already conducted a search of the fourth and the fifth (room/rooms).
2. His score was (one and a half centuries/one century and a half).
3. (Houses after houses/House after house) (was/were) looted by the dacoits.
4. Indian (force is/forces are) strong enough to face the challenge.
5. Gandhi has left his footmarks on the (sand/sands) of time.
6. Both his (daughter-in-laws/daughters-in-law) are beautiful.
7. There are 5 (M.A./M.A.s/M.A.'s) among the applicants.
8. The Indians are a religious-minded (people/peoples).
9. This vehicle is a carrier of (good/goods).
10. He brought the cake from (Deepak's/Deepaks/Deepaks').

Exercise # 20

1. The economics of your budget (is/are) wrong.
2. The logistics of the project (has/have) to be worked out.
3. Vital statistics (is/are) very important in beauty pageants.
4. A driver's license or two credit cards (is/are) required.
5. A thousand bushels (was/were) obtained.
6. Either his parents or his sister (has/have) to see me.
7. Each of Sylvia Plath's "bee poems" (use/uses) the theme of beekeeping to express aspects of the human condition.
8. This is our eighth (five-year/five-years) plan.
9. He gave me two ten (-rupee/-rupees) notes.
10. The cottage was thrown into (shamble/shambles) by the earthquake.

Solutions

Exercise # 01 to 20

Exercise # 01

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 1. bewilders | 2. plays |
| 3. was | 4. is |
| 5. lies | 6. is |
| 7. is | 8. is |
| 9. has | 10. were. |

Exercise # 02

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. spoonfuls | 2. These, are; |
| 3. equals | 4. is |
| 5. were | 6. is |
| 7. are | 8. is |
| 9. are | 10. is |

Exercise # 03

- | | |
|----------------------|--------|
| 1. seems | 2. is |
| 3. is | 4. is |
| 5. are | 6. is |
| 7. is | 8. has |
| 9. women, run, their | 10. is |

Exercise # 04

- | | |
|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. has | 2. has |
| 3. makes | 4. is |
| 5. alumnae | 6. That kind of apple |
| 7. is | 8. were |
| 9. have | 10. was a vegetarian |

Exercise # 05

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. were | 2. were not, would understand |
| 3. had gone, would have felt | 4. had been, have countenanced |
| 5. became, would | 6. speaks |
| 7. was | 8. galaxies, was |
| 9. his | 10. wait |

Exercise # 06

- | | |
|---------|------------------|
| 1. dare | 2. need |
| 3. Were | 4. are |
| 5. has, | 6. have |
| 7. is | 8. He, you and I |
| 9. his | 10. need |

Exercise # 07

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. are (but "More than one game <u>is</u> lost) | 2. was |
| 3. is | 4. is |
| 5. are | 6. was |
| 7. appears | 8. was |
| 9. five-man | 10. forty-foot |

Exercise # 08

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 1. alms, | 2. trousers, |
| 3. outskirts, | 4. remains, |
| 5. valuables, | 6. congratulations, |
| 7. dregs, | 8. fetters, |
| 9. poetry, | 10. stationery. |

Exercise # 09

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| 1. jewellery | 6. wastage |
| 2. luggage | 8. innings |
| 3. information | 10. are |
| 4. crockery | |
| 5. postage | |
| 7. is | |
| 9. is | |

Exercise # 10

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. are | 2. gentry |
| 3. swine | 4. people |
| 5. pairs | 6. thousand |
| 7. Thousands | 8. pair |
| 9. score | 10. Scores |

Exercise # 11

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. millions | 2. class |
| 3. lanes | 4. centuries |
| 5. page | 6. coaches |
| 7. ten rupees and a half | 8. one hour and a quarter |
| 9. two hours and a quarter | |
| 10. twenty kilometres and a half, one hour and a half | |

Exercise # 12

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. two and a half times | 2. one and a half times |
| 3. deserve | 4. were |
| 5. are | 6. his |
| 7. air | 8. pains |
| 9. returns | 10. iron |

Exercise # 13

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. effects | 2. goods |
| 3. force | 4. customs |
| 5. woods | 6. premises |
| 7. score | 8. scenery |
| 9. thousand | 10. innings |

Exercise # 14

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. thanks | 2. deer |
| 3. offspring | 4. cattle |
| 5. hundred | 6. tidings |
| 7. jury | 8. Dozens |
| 9. dozen | 10. alms |

Exercise # 15

- | | |
|-----------|---------|
| 1. are | 2. have |
| 3. is | 4. are |
| 5. has | 6. has |
| 7. follow | 8. have |
| 9. is | 10. are |

Exercise # 16

1. are
2. have
3. is
4. have
5. are
6. pair of spectacles
7. machinery
8. regards
9. are
10. pair

Exercise # 17

1. pairs
2. my finger-ends
3. thousand
4. hair has
5. advice
6. furniture
7. is
8. George the Fifth's
9. is
10. earnings are

Exercise # 18

1. uncle, the engineer's
2. The colour of my pen
3. three-man
4. information, is
5. The son of my father's friend
6. The wings of a kite
7. congratulations
8. fifty-foot
9. Truck after truck
10. houses

Exercise # 19

1. have, room
2. one century and a half
3. House after house, was
4. forces are
5. sands
6. daughters-in-law
7. M.A.'s
8. people
9. goods
10. Deepak's

Exercise # 20

1. are
2. have
3. are
4. are
5. were
6. has
7. uses
8. five-year
9. -rupee
10. shambles