Subject Verb Agreement

What is Subject Verb Agreement?

Subject verb agreement or subject verb concord in grammar is the agreement of the subject with the verb in number and person.

(a) The dog growls in the corner.

(b) The dogs growl in the corner.

The verbs in Sentences (a) and (b) demonstrate the agreement rule. In Sentence (a), the subject 'The dog' is singular. Hence, a singular verb 'growls' is used. In Sentence (b), the subject 'The dogs' is plural. Hence, the plural verb 'growl' is used. This relationship between the noun and the verb is called subject verb agreement.

The bee <u>flutters</u> by the flower.	The group of women was arrested by the police.
The bees <u>flutter</u> by the flower.	The groups of women were arrested by the police.
The sheep jumps over the fence.	All the troupes have performed.
The sheep jump over the fence.	The troupe <u>has</u> performed.

Rules of Subject Verb Agreement

• Uncountable nouns and material nouns will agree with singular verbs.

Water <u>is</u> a precious commodity.	
Golden sand <u>covers</u> the shore of the renowned beach.	
Time <u>flies</u> when you are having fun.	
Crocodile leather is used for making bags.	
Copper <u>is</u> a malleable metal.	

• In a **noun phrase**, the head word (either a noun or a pronoun) agrees with the verb.

The stars in the southern sky shine beautifully.

A swarm of bees has descended on him.

The books in the library are old and tattered.

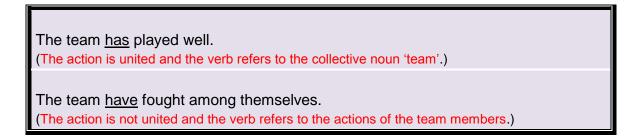
• Some collective nouns always agree with plural verbs.

The police are apprised of the matter.

The cattle have been fed.

The vermin are crawling out of the sewers.

- While dealing with **collective nouns**, one should determine whether the verb refers to the collection or the members within the collection. If the verb refers to the collection, the verb is singular. If the verb refers to the actions of individual members of the collective noun, the verb is plural.
- The nature of the action of the members in the collection nouns also determines whether the verb will be singular or plural. If the action is in unison, the verb is singular. If the action is not in unison, the verb is plural.



• Indefinite pronouns always agree with singular verbs.

Someone <u>has</u> been here.	Nothing is impossible.	None of this makes sense.
Much <u>was</u> wasted.	Everything <u>is</u> illuminated.	Something is crawling under the rug.

• Gerunds always agree with singular verbs.

Smoking <u>is</u> prohibited.	Lying <u>is</u> a sin.
Screening for narcotics is mandatory.	Farming was their occupation.

• In the case of **compound subjects** joined by the conjunction 'and', the verb will be plural.

Amit and Raghu <u>have</u> completed th assignments.	heir	Bones and teeth <u>are</u> excavated from the ruins of the ancient city.
The purse and all its contents were missir	ng.	Krishna and Balarama <u>are</u> brothers.

• Sometimes, the **compound subject** may represent a single idea, notion or thing. In such cases, the subject will agree with a singular verb.

Law and order <u>was</u> restored.	Ramu, the gardener and cook, <u>was</u> absent today.
(The words 'law' and 'order' represent the same idea.)	('Ramu', 'gardener' and 'cook' is the same person.)
The horse and carriage <u>has</u> arrived.	Peace and prosperity <u>prevails</u> .
('Horse' and 'carriage' are parts of the same unit.)	('Peace' and 'prosperity' represent the same idea.)

- Phrases such as 'along with' and 'as well as' and 'together with' connect two nouns like the conjunction 'and'.
- The verbs in these cases will agree with the first noun.

The man along with his sisters lives with their mother.

The minister along with the members of his party was staying in this hotel.

 When two nouns are connected by correlatives either...or and neither...nor, the verb agrees with the noun which is closest to it.

The man along with his sisters lives with their mother.

The minister along with the members of his party was staying in this hotel.

• When **distributive pronouns** are in the subject, the verb will be singular.

Each of the books <u>was</u> destroyed in the fire.	Either of the sisters is the culprit.
Neither of the men <u>is</u> eligible for the post.	None of you <u>has</u> a choice.

• When **units of measurement** are used in the subject, the verb will be singular.

5 kilos of rice was bought by the wealthy man.	3 hours <u>is</u> not a long time.
40 degrees is very hot even for the summer.	400 runs <u>is</u> a tough score to beat.

• When **pronouns** such as '**there**' and '**here**' are used, the verb will agree with the noun which follows it.

There are two reasons for this phenomenon.	Here <u>are</u> your <u>books</u> .
Here <u>is</u> a <u>flowery hat</u> .	There <u>goes</u> my <u>balloon</u> .

• Some nouns may end in '-s' and may seem plural, but they agree with singular verbs.

Economics <u>is</u> my favourite subject.	Measles <u>is</u> a disease.
The news <u>is</u> not very good.	Physics <u>is</u> taught by Dr Desai.

• Some nouns are always in the plural form and will agree with plural verbs. These words may sound awkward in their singular form. Many of them operate in pairs. Examples: Jeans, scissors, shorts

My glasses are missing from the table.	The alms were collected by the beggars.
The goods <u>were</u> delivered before 9 pm the next day.	These pants <u>require</u> thorough washing.

• Some nouns do not have a plural form. These words may be singular or plural.

The deer <u>is</u> petrified.	The deer are petrified.
The fish <u>swims</u> in the pond.	The fish <u>swim</u> in the pond.
The sheep jumps over the fence.	The sheep jump over the fence.

• Fractional expressions may agree with singular or plural verbs depending on their number.

One-fifth of the wealth was donated to charity. (One part)

<u>Two</u>-thirds of my hair are grey. (Two parts)

<u>Three</u>-fourth of the estate is covered with trees. (Three-fourth is a single part.)

• The phrase '... is one of the' will be followed by a plural verb.

She is one of the greatest pianists who have ever played in this hall.

Manish is one of the tallest boys who have played for the team.

Michael Jackson is one of those artists who have admirers all around the world.

• Sometimes, a **modifier** may distance the subject from the verb. In such cases, the modifiers should not affect subject verb agreement in any way.

He who garnered the most number of votes has been declared the winner.

The monkeys living in the most secluded part of the jungle have made an appearance.

The one glaring at her while munching on peanuts is her mother-in-law.

