

Subject Verb Agreement

Subject and verbs form a significant part of any statement that you make. So, if your aim is to have perfect grammar, you need to memorize the rules that apply when a subject and a verb is put together. These rules are collectively known as the subject-verb agreement. We agree that this subject-verb agreement can be a bit tricky and complicated but once you learn these rules, you will use verbs in their correct form with ease. To make you work easier, here is a list of the most common subject-verb agreement rules with examples. Go through them, and you are ready to ace any test on subject-verb agreement.

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Subject-Verb Agreement Rules with Examples

Let's begin with the 12 most common and important rules of Subject-Verb Agreement:

Subject = underlined

Verb = *Italicized*

Rule 1. A Singular Subject Goes with a Singular Verb

A singular subject goes with a singular verb.

Incorrect: Sohra *play* the guitar every day.

Correct: Sohra *plays* the guitar every day.

In this statement, Sohra is singular and therefore will take on a singular verb i.e., plays.

Rule 2. A Plural Subject Goes with a Plural Verb.

The second rule of Subject-Verb Agreement is as follows: A plural subject goes with a plural verb.

Incorrect: They plays the guitar every day.

Correct: They play the guitar every day.

In this statement, They is a plural pronoun and therefore will take on a plural verb i.e., play.

Rule 3. Joined by And

The next rule of Subject-Verb Agreement says that if in a sentence two or more nouns or pronouns are connected using “and” then the verb used will be plural.

Incorrect: Rahul and Anekha is siblings.

Correct: Rahul and Anekha are siblings.

In this statement, there are two nouns Rahul and Anekha connect by “and” and therefore the verb used is plural i.e., “are”.

Incorrect: Rahul and Anekha sings together

Correct: Rahul and Anekha sing together

In this statement also, there are two nouns and therefore the verb used is plural i.e., sing.

Rule 4. Singular and Plural Subjects Connected by Conjunction

The next rule of Subject-Verb Agreement focuses on the use of or/nor. If in a sentence two or more nouns or pronouns are connected using “or/nor” then the verb used will be singular.

Incorrect: Your class teacher or the principal sanction your leave application.

Correct: Your class teacher or the principal sanctions your leave application.

In this statement, the two nouns class teacher and principal are connected using “or” and therefore the verb used is singular i.e., sanctions.

Rule 5. Sentence contains both singular and a plural pronoun

In this rule of Subject-Verb Agreement, when a sentence contains both singular and a plural pronoun, the verb used will be according to the pronoun closer to the verb.

Incorrect: Shiva and his friends meets every week at the cafeteria.

Correct: Shiva and his friends meet every week at the cafeteria.

In this statement, the plural noun “friends” is closest to the verb and therefore will be plural i.e., meet.

Rule 6. Using “Do not” and “Does not” in Sentences

A singular pronoun uses “does not” and a plural one uses “do not”. But there is an exception to this rule. This rule of Subject-Verb Agreement explains that “Do not” is used with the singular pronouns “I” and “You” instead of “does not” as it ideally should be.

Incorrect: She do not eat ice cream

Correct: She does not eat ice cream

In this statement, she is singular and therefore, the verb does not will be used.

Incorrect: They does not eat ice cream.

Correct: They do not eat ice cream.

In this statement, they is plural and therefore, the verb do not will be used.

Incorrect: I does not eat ice cream

Correct: I do not eat ice cream

In this statement, I is a singular pronoun but do not will be using along with it instead of does not. And that's why it's an exception.

Rule 7. Sentence Has an Additional Phrase

In case a sentence has an additional phrase, the verb should always agree with the subject of the statement and not be influenced by the pronouns or nouns of the additional phrase.

Incorrect: This book, as well as all the other books of this writer are boring.

Correct: This book, as well as all the other books of this writer is boring.

In this statement, "this book" is the subject and it's singular. Therefore, the verb used will also be singular i.e., "is" and not "are".

Rule 8. When Words like Each, Every and No are the subject

The next rule of Subject-Verb Agreement is about the use of each, each one, either, neither, everyone, everybody, anybody, anyone, nobody, somebody, someone, and no one as words which are singular in nature and therefore will always use a singular verb.

Incorrect: Each one of you are going to give a live presentation.

Correct: Each one of you is going to give a live presentation.

In this statement, "each one" is used and therefore, the singular verb "is" will be used.

Incorrect: Neither one of you are allowed to go home.

Correct: Neither one of you is allowed to go home.

In this statement, "neither" is used and therefore, the singular verb "is" will be used.

Rule 9. When Mass nouns like Civics, Mathematics, Dollars are the Subject

Mass nouns like civics, mathematics, dollars, measles, and news which cannot be counted use singular verbs under the rules of Subject-Verb Agreement.

Incorrect: Mathematics are my favourite subject.

Correct: Mathematics is my favourite subject.

In this statement, the mass noun "mathematics" is used along with a singular verb i.e., is.

Rule 10. Plurale Tantum are the Subject

In English, there is a set of nouns called Plurale Tantum which doesn't have a singular form like trousers, scissors, pants, etc. Such nouns always use a plural verb.

Incorrect: Those black trousers is mine

Correct: Those black trousers are mine.

In this statement, black trousers refer to a single object but uses the plural verb i.e., are.

Rule 11. Collective Nouns are the Subject

In this rule of Subject-Verb Agreement, collective nouns like class, committee, family, group, etc take on singular verbs.

Incorrect: The history class start at 9 a.m.

Correct: The history class starts at 9 a.m.

In this statement, history class is a collective noun and therefore the singular noun "starts" will be used along with it.

Rule 12. If the subject is singular, the verb will also be singular

The number of subjects is not influenced by expressions like accompanied by, in addition to or including. If the subject is singular, the verb will also be singular and it will remain so irrespective of such expressions.

Incorrect: Neha, accompanied by her sister, are going to perform today.

Correct: Neha, accompanied by her sister, is going to perform today.

In this statement, the subject "Neha" is singular and therefore the verb used is also singular i.e., "is". The phrase accompanied by has no impact on the verb.

What Is the Subject-Verb Agreement?

When the subject follows the verb (especially in sentences beginning with the expletives "there is" or "there are"), special care is needed to determine the subject and to make certain that the verb agrees with it. For example, if you use a single subject 'He' then the single verb 'is' would appear- 'He is talking too much. The two subjects and verbs must be aligned to ensure agreement.

Exceptions to the Subject-Verb Agreement Rules

- "Neither" and "either" require singular verbs even though they seem to be referring to two separate things.
- When a sentence compounds a positive and a negative subject and only one is plural, the verb should agree with the positive subject.
- "Anyone," "everyone," "someone," "no one," and "nobody" always require singular verbs.
- Words that indicate portions of a whole, such as "percent," "fraction," "some," "none," and "remainder," require a singular verb only if the object of the preposition is singular.

- “Who,” “that,” and “which” can be singular or plural, according to the noun directly in front of them.
- The phrase introduced by “as well as” or “along with” modifies the earlier word but doesn’t compound the subjects.
- Modifiers between the subject and verb do not affect whether the verb is singular or plural.

Subject-Verb Agreement Exercises

So, these are the major rules of the subject-verb agreement. We hope you understand each and every rule. Now it’s time to test your knowledge. Solve these questions and let’s see how many of them do you get right on the first go.

- John and his brother (**is/are**) playing football.
 - Aryan (**do not/does not**) like to play basketball.
 - Either of you (**have/has**) stolen the book.
 - Your pants (**is/are**) in the top shelf.
 - My family (**belongs/belong**) to the Mahou tribe.
 - Mr, Swamy as well as his family (**is/are**) quite humble.
 - Mary (**sing/sings**) very well.
 - The novel, including all the essays (**take/takes**) about two hours to read.
 - They (**eat/eats**) lunch together everyday.
 - The players as well as the coach (**want/wants**) to win.
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- Is
 - Does not
 - Has
 - Are
 - Belongs
 - Is
 - Sings
 - Takes
 - Eat
 - Want