

Singular and Plural Subjects--Rules for Nouns and Pronouns

1. Most singular nouns add s or es to make them plural.
2. Some singular nouns change spelling to form the plural, such as mouse to mice, child to children, woman to women.
3. Some noun subjects such as news, sports, statistics, etc., appear to be plural but are considered singular for subject/verb agreement.
4. For subject/verb agreement purposes, some nouns like eyeglasses, pants, riches, etc., are always considered plural even though they refer to a single item.
5. When the group acts as one unit, the collective noun as subject is considered singular; when members of the group act individually, thus creating more than one action, the collective noun acting as a subject is considered plural.
6. The word number, functioning as a subject, is plural when preceded by a, and is singular when preceded by the.
7. When subjects expressing periods of time, distance, amounts of money and quantities represent a total amount, the subject is considered singular; i.e., Fifty dollars is a lot of money.
8. Even though plural and compound nouns occur in a title of a book or the name of a company or firm, the title itself signifies one work or entity and is therefore singular.
9. Infinitives acting as subjects are singular.
10. The personal pronouns he, she, and it are singular; we, you, and they are plural.
11. When I is the subject, it will take a plural action verb; if I is followed by a be verb, present tense will be am and past tense will be was.
12. The following indefinite pronouns are always **singular**: another, anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, every, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, somebody, someone, something. The following indefinite pronouns are always **plural**: both, few, many, others, and several.
13. For subject/verb agreement purposes, indefinite pronouns like most, all, some, any, none can be either singular or plural, depending on whether they refer to one thing or entity or more than one thing or entity. The meaning of the sentence will help determine this; if these words are followed by a prepositional phrase, the singular or plural nature of the object of the preposition will determine if the indefinite pronoun acting as a subject is singular or plural.
14. If the subject consists of two or more words joined by and, the subject is considered plural.
15. When two subjects joined by and are considered as one unit (like ham and eggs, horse and buggy), then the subject is considered singular.
16. When two subjects are joined by or or nor, the subject closest to the verb determines if the entire subject is singular or plural.
17. Two or more subjects joined by and and preceded by each or every are considered singular.
18. Compound subjects joined by either . . . or or neither . . . nor use the subject closest to the verb to determine if the subject is singular or plural.