

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

The term *subject-verb agreement* indicates that the subject of a sentence and its verb agree in number, or that the subject and verb are both singular or both plural. If your teacher marks a sentence with a subject-verb agreement error, you have placed either a plural verb with a singular subject or a singular verb with a plural subject. The problem with agreement occurs only when the sentence you write is in present tense, for the singular and plural forms of past and future tenses are the same. When you write in present tense, however, you must make your verb agree with your subject. In other words, if your subject is singular, you must use a singular verb; if the subject is plural, a plural verb. Usually, when nouns end in *s*, they are plural (*girl, girls*). Sometimes making them plural requires a change in spelling (*child, children*). Verbs are just the opposite of nouns. When a present tense verb ends in *s*, the verb is singular. Therefore, a rule of thumb is that, in most situations, only one of the words, either the subject or verb, will end in *s*.

For example: The girl sings. The girls sing.

Read the following sentences and determine whether the verb agrees with the subject. If it does not, correct the verb.

1. The outfits in the store window is very expensive.
2. One of the antique bureaus were valued at over ten thousand dollars.
3. The gold necklace, along with the two pairs of earrings, sell for only two hundred dollars.
4. The leaves of the pear tree is bright green.
5. On the other side of town is a great Chinese restaurant.
6. Everyone who comes in the store usually buy something.
7. Each of the restaurants offers its own unique blend of coffee.
8. The president as well as the trustees dislike the proposal.
9. Determination and discipline is necessary to master a foreign language.
10. Jose is one of those people who is successful at everything.
11. The floor and the ceiling has to be repaired because of the flooding.
12. Until last year grammatical errors, not organization, was the instructor's main concern.
13. The jury was not in agreement on the validity of the evidence.
14. The number of careers Yoshi can enter are large.

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. (Example: jury, committee)
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.
19. Prepositional phrases that come after the subject do not affect whether it is singular or plural.
20. The number of the pronouns who, whom, which, and that is determined by the pronoun's antecedent.