

Grammar Subject-Verb Agreement

- A. **When we write, our verbs must always be in the correct form for the subject of the sentence.**

Usually, we can hear it if we use the wrong form of a **verb**. Say the following sentence out loud:

Amir are going to the shop at lunch.

You can probably hear that the sentence sounds wrong. In fact, it should be:

Amir is going to the shop at lunch.

Amir is the **subject**, and he is **singular**, so the verb needs to be singular, too.

Now read this sentence aloud:

The girls is running for the bus.

The girls are the subject, and they are plural, so the verb needs to be plural, too:

The girls are running for the bus.

Read and correct the following sentences.

1. Shay walk to the shop.

2. Asha be looking for her pen.

3. Can you goes into town later?

4. The sun shine as Lilli walks in.

5. Can you sees Micah in there?

Now, rewrite these sentences and insert the correct verb form (in the present tense) to agree with the subject:

6. I (to need) to go to the dentist after school.

7. Powerfully, Emma Radacanu (to smash) the ball over the net.

What was that again?

Verbs are words which imply an action, a state, or something that happens, e.g. walk, be, progress.

The **subject** of a sentence is the person or thing (noun) that is doing the verb.

Singular means there is only one.

Plural means there is more than one.

B. Sometimes, we have to think more carefully about whether the subject is singular or plural.

For example, there may be a list of singular nouns. If there is more than one, then the verb needs to be plural:

Ana, Theo, Mo and Jing goes to the concert. ✗

Ana, Theo, Mo and Jing go to the concert. ✓

Sometimes, the subject might be a **collective noun**, so although it might sound plural, it needs a singular verb:

The group eat pizza together. ✗

The group eats pizza together. ✓

Finally, **abstract nouns** are also always singular:

Compassion are an important quality. ✗

Compassion is an important quality. ✓

Read and correct the following sentences:

1. Skyla, Dan, Sian and Mae leaves the car.

2. Unfortunately, the family are too late to get a discount.

3. The peace are shattered by the sound of shouting.

4. The class misbehave in assembly.

5. I think my phone, tablet, jewellery and bag is missing.

Now, rewrite these sentences and insert the correct verb form (in the present tense) to agree with the subject:

6. Innate skill (to be) an important factor for sporting success.

7. *The Quantum of Solace and Spectre* (to lack) the emotional intensity of the latest James Bond film.

What was that again?

Collective nouns are words which denote a group of things. For example, class, family, group.

Abstract nouns denote ideas, qualities or states – things that are uncountable.

C. In sentences beginning with 'There is...' or 'There are...', the subject comes after the verb. The verb still needs to agree with the subject.

So, for example:

There is chocolates left in the box. ✗

There are chocolates left in the box. ✓

The word 'chocolates' is plural, and therefore we use 'There are...'

When we have a list of nouns, we need to remember that there is more than one:

There is cauliflower, potato, peas, carrots and beans left. ✗

There are cauliflower, potato, peas, carrots and beans left. ✓

When we use 'a lot', we always use 'are':

There is a lot of arguments for abolishing school uniform. ✗

There are a lot of arguments for abolishing school uniform. ✓

When we use a collective noun, we always use 'is':

There are a range of options. ✗

There is a range of options. ✓

Rewrite these sentences, using 'There is...' or 'There are...' at the start:

- Several blockbusters coming out this year.

- Adil, Rohaan and Leila in the queue.

- A group of people inside.

- A water bottle on the desk.

- Exercise books in the cupboard.

- A lot of reasons for being late.

Now, write two sentences starting with 'There are...' or 'There is...'

D. We sometimes use sentences where there is more than one verb applied to the subject. In these cases, these verbs all need to agree with the subject.

For example:

Lola laughs at the film and then cry when there is a sad ending. ✗

Lola laughs at the film and then cries when there is a sad ending. ✓

Lola is singular, so the verbs need to be singular, too.

Remember, the verb always agrees with its subject, e.g.

Lola laughs at the film but Lena and Bobbi cries at the ending. ✗

Lola laughs at the film but Lena and Bobbi cry at the ending. ✓

Here, the subject of 'laughs' is Lola, but the subject of 'cry' is Lena and Bobbi – a plural.

Read and correct the following sentences:

1. In my opinion, Taylor Swift sing really well but dress badly.

2. My younger brother play on Fortnite and scream if I ask him to come off it.

3. As the crowd watches, the man shout at the muggers while they runs off down the road.

4. The team sprints to the finish line and raises their hands in the air.

5. Practice essays are the best way to understand a subject and shows your ability.

Now, rewrite these sentences and insert the correct verb form (in the present tense) to agree with the subject:

6. The England squad (to play) well and (to seize) every opportunity to score.

7. I (to lend) him my tablet and (to tell) him to give it back tomorrow.

- E. **Sometimes, the verb is split from the subject by another phrase. In these cases, you still need to remember what the subject of the verb is.**

For example, a **subordinate clause** could be added to the sentence to give more information.

The woman, who wears a red dress, want to be allowed in. ✗

The woman, who wears a red dress, wants to be allowed in. ✓

Despite the **subordinate clause** in the middle of the sentence, the verb 'wants' still refers to the woman.

What was that again?

Subordinate clauses are phrases within a sentence which can't be sentences on their own.

Read and correct the following sentences:

1. Downloads, which are categorised by genre, has increased by 20%.

2. The new track by Justin Timberlake, who is my mum's favourite artist, are popular.

3. The man, despite his swollen ankle, complete the race.

4. The group who came to the school on Friday have tweeted about the visit.

5. The exit passes, printed on green card, needs to be handed out.

Now, rewrite these sentences and insert the correct verb form (in the present tense) to agree with the subject:

6. The Paralympians who (to be) featured in the article (to train) for five hours a day.

7. Unless consumers, by which I mean all of us, (to take) action, there will be an environmental disaster.

F. When we use 'or' between nouns in a sentence, the verb remains singular.

So, for example:

Ayan or Robin are going to be chosen as class MP. ✗

Ayan or Robin is going to be chosen as class MP. ✓

Only one of them will be chosen, so the verb only applies to one.

Don't get this confused with when the two nouns are joined by 'and':

*Ayan **and** Robin are going to be chosen as class MPs.* ✓

They are both going to be chosen, therefore the verb applies to them both – it is plural.

Mark whether these sentences should use 'and' or 'or':

1. England and/or Wales belong in the cup final.
2. Nicki Minaj, Dua Lipa and/or Lady Gaga sings on the album.
3. Backpacking and/or a safari is my dream holiday.
4. Sushi, pizza and/or pasta taste amazing.
5. Romeo Beckham and/or Kate Hudson are examples of celebrities with famous parents.

Now, rewrite these sentences and insert the correct verb form (in the present tense) to agree with the subject:

1. Mina and Robyn (to argue) about which is their favourite.

2. Gogglebox or Eastenders (to win) the top award.

G. Using your knowledge of subject-verb agreement, mark whether the following sentences are correct, and rewrite them where necessary.

Tick or cross?

1. There are a lot of tennis balls left on the court.

2. The teachers set a hard task for the end of term test.

3. The atmosphere were tense.

4. There is English, Maths and Science before lunchtime.

5. Pop and rock is my favourite music genres.

6. The band need to get some water before performing.

7. Scarlett Johansson, who starred in Black Widow, give a fantastic performance.

8. Jake, Harry and Louis fall out all the time.

9. There are a murder of crows in my garden.

10. Harry Kane was great but Jack Grealish and Bukayo Saka was better.

11. There is rules for a reason.

12. Mount Everest or Mont Blanc are the best mountain to climb.

Grammar **Subject-Verb Agreement**

- Answers

A

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2. Asha **is** looking for her pen.
3. Can you **go** into town later?
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2. **There are** Adil, Rohaan and Leila in the queue.
3. **There is** a group of people inside.
4. **There is** a water bottle on the desk.
5. **There are** exercise books in the cupboard.
6. **There are a** lot of reasons for being late.

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3. As the crowd watches, the man **shouts** at the muggers while they **run** off down the road.
4. The team **sprint** to the finish line and **raise** their hands in the air.
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