

SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT

A verb **must agree** with its subject in **number**. This means that a singular subject requires a singular verb, and a plural subject requires a plural verb. **In the present tense, verbs take no ending except for third person singular (he, she, it), which takes an -s on the verb.**

Singular		Plural	
I	<i>write</i>	WE	<i>write</i>
YOU	<i>write</i>	YOU	<i>write</i>
HE, SHE, IT	<i>writes</i>	THEY	<i>write</i>

Example: *My parents*^[they] **write**^[no -s] *well, but my brother*^[he] **does**^[-s] *not.*

To avoid problems in subject/verb agreement, you must be able to identify the subject of the verb [*the subject is who or what is doing the verb*]; then you must **listen to the subject and verb together** without any other words that might get in the way of how they sound together.

In many sentences, the subject and verb are together; however, there are certain situations to watch out for.

WATCH OUT FOR:

Intervening words (words between the subject and verb)

A prepositional phrase between the subject and verb [remember: the subject of a sentence is **never** in a prep. phrase]
A student [he] *in two of my classes* **sleeps** *through class.* [*student* - not *classes* - is the subject of *sleeps*.]

Relative clauses [*who, which, or that* clauses that modify a noun]
Jeanie, who lives in Richmond, is studying to be a teacher.

The verb after the *who, which, that* must agree with the noun the clause is modifying [this word can be in a prep. phrase]
The apple pie, which was the winner of the baking contest, was delicious. [*which was* refers to *apple pie*]
I received a letter from my college roommate who lives in Richmond. [*who lives* refers to *roommate*, which is in a prep. phrase]

Inverted order of subject and verb [when the subject comes after the verb]

There are several reasons for the decision. [In a sentence beginning with *Here* or *There*, the subject follows the verb.]
Does^[-s] *your son*^[he] **believe** *in Santa Claus?* [In a question, the subject usually follows the verb or helping verb.]

Indefinite pronouns

Words with *one, body, or thing* in them and *each/either/neither* are **singular** and require an **-s** on the verb.
Everybody in this room is under arrest.
Somebody in this class has my book.
Neither of the boys is guilty. [remember - because *boys* is in a prep. phrase, *neither* is the subject of the verb]

Compound subjects

joined by *and* are usually plural and take a plural [no -s] verb
The children and the dog are tearing up my flower garden.

joined by *or* or *nor* require that the verb agree only with the subject closer to it
Either the children or the dog is tearing up my flower garden. [the verb *is* agrees only with *dog*]
Either the dog or the children are tearing up my flower garden. [the verb *are* agrees only with *children*]

Collective nouns [nouns that name groups] are usually considered singular, even though they may end in an s

My family^[it] **is** *planning its vacation now.*
Economics^[it] **is** *my hardest subject this term; mathematics*^[it] **is** *my favorite.*
[This includes **units of time** - *two hours is a long time to wait* - and **money** - *five dollars is a lot to pay for a pen*]

REMEMBER: An S on a verb is SINGULAR.

Subject - Verb Agreement

Circle the subject or antecedent which governs the verb in parentheses, and underline the correct form of the verb. (Remember that the subject of a sentence will not be in a prepositional phrase, but the antecedent of a relative clause may be.)

1. Neither the gorillas nor the tiger at the zoo (was, were) very happy with the living quarters.
2. A cold shower or two glasses of lemonade (refreshes, refresh) Amanda after her run.
3. Tomorrow the committee on foreign affairs (decides, decide) whether or not to ban travel to other countries.
4. Which one of the boys (is, are) going with us?
5. (Has, Have) either your mother or your brother arrived yet?
6. The softball team that (is, are) in the playoffs (was, were) late for the last game.
7. Which one of your sisters (has, have) qualified for the tournament?
8. A man and woman from the modeling agency (was, were) interviewing the student.
9. A large baboon with three small chimps (has, have) escaped from the zoo.
10. Neither the teacher nor the students (wants, want) to have class next Monday.
11. A smile and a friendly greeting (helps, help) a newcomer feel welcome.
12. One of the puzzle's pieces (was, were) missing.
13. Everyone in the church pews (seems, seem) to be listening to the sermon.
14. By the end of the drought, each of the trees and bushes (was, were) wilting.
15. Seymour, together with Horace, (is, are) learning how to make seaweed sandwiches.
16. There (is, are) many good reasons to continue your education beyond high school.
17. Neither James nor his teachers (has, have) a solution for his problem.
18. Half of the senior class (is, are) going on the class trip.
19. Under the tree (was, were) a group of children from the local day camp.
20. One thousand dollars (is, are) a lot to bet on the roll of the dice.
21. Anyone who (steals, steal) my purse won't find much in it.
22. The cars that (was, were) towed from the restricted area are back again.
23. My little brother's class at school (is, are) going on a field trip today.