A verb must agree with its subject in number. **Number** refers to whether a word is singular—naming one—or plural—naming more than one.

A singular subject takes a singular verb.

That **boy follows** a trail. (singular subject, singular verb)

A plural subject takes a plural verb.

Those **boys follow** a trail. (plural subject, plural verb)

In a sentence with a verb phrase, the first helping verb must agree with the subject.

For the past hour the **boys have been following** the trail.

The **contractions** *doesn’t* and *don’t* are short forms of *does not* and *do not*. Use *doesn’t* with all singular subjects except *I* and *you*. Use *don’t* with all plural subjects, *I*, and *you*.

**Doesn’t** this **tree look** old? **Don’t** those **trees look** tall?

### A. Making Subjects and Verbs Agree in Number

In each sentence, underline the subject. Then underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

1. The turtles *(was, were)* sunning themselves on a log.
2. Marie *(was, were)* looking for dragonflies.
3. Her teacher *(want, wants)* her to write a paper on them.
5. Anna and Marie *(has, have)* never seen cattails before.
6. The teacher *(says, say)* cattails are edible.
7. They *(was, were)* disappointed when they tried eating one.
8. Jim *(has, have)* captured a garter snake.
9. He *(assures, assure)* everyone that it is not poisonous.
10. Fred *(is, are)* calling it a “garden snake.”

### B. Identifying Subjects and Verbs That Agree in Number

In each sentence, underline the subject and circle the verb. On the line following the sentence, write whether the two parts of the sentence **Agree** or **Disagree** in number.

1. Fred and John wants adventure on this hike.
2. They is grabbing at a turtle.
3. Their teacher reminds them of their promise not to remove any plants or animals.
4. The students has agreed to that rule.
5. The turtles have disappeared under the water.
Agreement in Number

A. Making Subjects and Verbs Agree in Number
On the line following each sentence, write the present tense form of the verb that agrees with the subject.

1. The captain (board) the ship early this evening. ________________
2. The musicians (practice) diligently. ________________
3. Usually, the plumber (arrive) on the work site before the carpenter. ________________
4. The French teacher (like) browsing through bookstores. ________________
5. Tom (be) searching for a quote from Shakespeare. ________________
6. Fritz (think) the pasta dish is delicious. ________________
7. The team members (go) to the library together. ________________
8. Thomas (have) been working on that problem for a half hour. ________________
9. I (be) the one who spoke up when nobody else would. ________________
10. Marty (feel) she knows the piece well enough now. ________________

B. Correcting Agreement Errors
In each sentence, underline the subject and circle the verb. If the verb agrees with the subject, write Correct on the line to the right. If it does not agree, write the correct verb.

1. Jose are searching for leopard frogs. ________________
2. Mary were looking among the bushes. ________________
3. I were observing the water striders. ________________
4. They actually stand on the water surface. ________________
5. Their feet makes little indentations on the surface. ________________
6. How many students is on that bus? ________________
7. They were told to bring their lunches. ________________
8. One student have brought a net. ________________
9. How many sets of wings do dragonflies have? ________________
10. How do dragonflies and damselflies differ? ________________
A. Proofreading for Errors in Agreement

Underline the five verbs in this paragraph that do not agree with their subjects. On the lines below, write the numbers of the sentences in which you find agreement errors. After each sentence number, write the subject and the verb form that agrees with it.

1. Mr. Johnson love swamps. 2. Therefore, on our field trip we went to Green Swamp. 3. Most of us would have chosen a day at the beach. 4. According to Mr. Johnson, the neatest things happens in swamps. 5. He have lectured more than once on the topic of metamorphosis. 6. His examples has been caterpillars turning into butterflies and tadpoles turning into frogs. 7. He gets pretty excited about tadpoles. 8. Actually, the metamorphosis is amazing. 9. One week the animals are breathing with gills, like fish; and the next week they have lungs, like us. 10. Even the dedicated beach goers wants another visit to the swamp this fall.

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B. Making Subjects and Verbs Agree in Writing

Choose one of the topics below and write a paragraph of at least four sentences about it. Use the present tense throughout. Make sure the subjects and verbs of all the sentences agree.

Exploring a swamp
A memorable field trip
Animals and plants in a swamp
Useful insects
Exploring a forest
Science class
Respect for nature
Tadpoles and frogs
A **compound subject** is made up of two or more simple subjects joined by a conjunction such as **and**, **or**, or **nor**.

**And** A compound subject whose subjects are joined by **and** usually takes a plural verb.

*Monet and Manet were both great painters.*

Sometimes a compound subject joined by **and** is used as a single unit and takes a singular verb.

*The horse and buggy is an outmoded form of travel.*

**Or or Nor** When the parts of a compound subject are joined by **or** or **nor**, the verb should agree with the part closest to it.

*Neither the Impressionists nor Picasso was represented in that gallery.*

Either Picasso or the Impressionists are good subjects for a term paper.

### Making Verbs Agree with Compound Subjects

In each sentence, underline each part of the compound subject. Underline twice the word joining the parts. Then underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

1. Both Vincent Van Gogh and Pablo Picasso (was, were) great artists.
2. Picasso and Diego Velázquez (was, were) Spanish.
3. Neither the sketches nor the painting (captures, capture) the subject completely.
4. Either the artist or the patron (is, are) going to be present.
5. The painters and sculptors (were, was) in agreement.
6. The patrons and the artist (has, have) been conferring on the project.
7. Neither the patrons nor the artist (has, have) been entirely happy.
8. Both Paul Cézanne and Picasso (are, is) major figures.
9. Paintings and music (works, work) well together.
10. Neither fine paintings nor memorable music (is, are) created easily.
11. Either Impressionist music or paintings (is, are) to be discussed in today’s lecture.
12. The musicians and the artists (is, are) invited to the reception.
13. Neither the artists nor the director (is, are) responsible for the hors d’oeuvres.
14. Both the musicians and the artist (deserve, deserves) our thanks.
15. Either the gallery director or the artists (is, are) at the center of that crowd.
16. The patrons and guests (is, are) already anticipating next year’s event.
A. Making Verbs Agree with Compound Subjects

In each sentence, underline each part of the compound subject. Underline twice the word joining the parts. Then underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

1. The Wongs and the Sterlings (is, are) friends.
2. Neither the players nor the coach (feels, feel) ready for this game.
3. My mother and my father (agrees, agree) on the things that matter.
4. Either two socks or one shirt (fits, fit) in the pocket of the overnight bag.
5. Several students and the teacher (has, have) asked for new lights.
6. Either the students or the teacher (is, are) expected to be at the meeting.
7. Neither Teresa nor her brothers (talks, talk) very much.
8. Both the bikes and the moped (needs, need) new parts.
9. Either canned goods or money (is, are) an acceptable donation.
10. Dave’s pet squirrel or the birds (taps, tap) at the window almost every hour.

B. Using the Correct Verb with a Compound Subject

Write the correct form of the given verb. Make it agree with the compound subject.

1. Neither the council members nor the mayor (be) present.
2. Books and videotapes (be) available from the library.
3. Both the council members and the mayor (have) spoken out on that matter.
4. Neither the council members nor the mayor (object) to the proposal.
5. Either the French horn or the trumpets (play) the next passage.
6. The exercise book and tapes (come) from the library.
7. Neither the glasses nor the bottle (be) full.
8. The librarian or our history teachers (help) us find materials.
9. Either the teachers or the librarian (be) helping Jack right now.
10. Neither the reporters nor the photographer (come) to these meetings.
A. Correcting Errors in Agreement

Find the mistakes in the paragraph. For each sentence, write the correct present tense verb to agree with the subject. If the verb does agree, write Correct.

(1) The Impressionists and Post-Impressionists is the most important artists represented in our gallery. (2) Other galleries have bigger collections, but we have exceptional works in these two areas. (3) Neither the cubists nor Matisse are represented. (4) But either our Monet landscapes or our Degas self-portrait make us a center of modern art. (5) Both the landscape and the self-portrait is great.

1. ____________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________
4. ____________________________________________________________
5. ____________________________________________________________

B. Using the Correct Verb with Compound Subjects

Write a sentence using each compound subject given in parentheses and a verb in the present tense. Add words to the given subject as needed for the sense of the sentence.

1. (a mother and her baby) ____________________________________________________________
2. (several houses or a mall) __________________________________________________________
3. (Either art or music) ______________________________________________________________
4. (several paintings or a sculpture) __________________________________________________
5. (both the students and the teacher) ________________________________________________
6. (a painting or two sketches) _______________________________________________________

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Agreement Problems in Sentences

Subjects in Unusual Positions In questions, sentences beginning with here or there, or sentences in which an adjective, an adverb, or a phrase is placed first, the subject can be hard to find. Reorder the words in standard order to determine whether the verb should be singular or plural.

Question  
Does your house have a big yard?  
Your house does have a big yard.

Here and There  
Here are the new bushes.  
The new bushes are here.

Beginning Phrase  
Beyond the hedge lies a fishpond.  
A fishpond lies beyond the hedge.

Predicate Nouns A predicate noun follows a linking verb and describes the subject. The verb must agree with the subject, not the predicate noun.

The delight of the gardener is the old rosebushes.  
The old rosebushes are the gardener’s delight.

Prepositional Phrases The subject of a verb is never part of a prepositional phrase. Mentally block out any words between the subject and verb. Make the verb agree with the subject.

This pot of flowers blooms in spring. (singular subject and verb)  
The flowers in this pot bloom in spring. (plural subject and verb)

Making Subjects and Verbs Agree

Underline the subject of each sentence. Draw a line through any phrase that separates the subject from the verb. Finally, underline the verb that agrees with the subject.

1. Houses by Frank Lloyd Wright (is, are) usually on the National Register.  
2. (Does, Do) the inexperienced actors in the play know their lines?  
3. The students in the honors class (is, are) doing a new project.  
4. Movies full of intrigue and adventure (appeals, appeal) to Henry.  
5. Off through the woods (runs, run) Little Red Riding Hood.  
6. Meals on the road (is, are) a problem.  
7. (Does, Do) this restaurant’s fish sandwiches taste fishy?  
8. Only one can of chicken-with-rice soup (is, are) left on the shelf.  
9. “Off with their heads,” (shouts, shout) the mad queen.  
10. There (is, are) ten eggs still in the refrigerator.  
11. (Is, Are) the students’ parents invited to the reception?  
12. The list of names of donors (is, are) being read now.  
13. Down the river (rushes, rush) the racing canoes.  
14. (Has, Have) the famous architect visited her completed homes?
Agreement Problems in Sentences

A. Making Subjects and Verbs Agree
Underline the subject. Then underline the verb that agrees with the subject.

1. (Is, Are) John and Marie going on the architectural tour?
2. Here (is, are) a building and a gardener’s cottage by Frank Lloyd Wright.
3. Maintenance of these older buildings (is, are) difficult.
4. The number of buildings from the 1920s (falls, fall) yearly.
5. (Do, Does) Wright’s office building still exist?
6. There (stands, stand) the Adler and Sullivan skyscraper.
7. (Was, Were) Wright working for Louis Sullivan at that time?
8. The list of remarkable structures (is, are) a long one.
9. Here (is, are) one of the first major buildings by Henry Hobson Richardson.
10. Where (was, were) Richardson living then?

B. Correcting Agreement in Number
In each of these sentences, decide whether the verb agrees with the subject. If it does, write Correct on the line. If it does not, write the correct form of the verb on the line.

1. Were the exchange student taking English as a second language? ________________
2. There was seven ducks in the pond this afternoon. ________________
3. Here are the list of books for my biology class. ________________
4. Up into the clouds soar the skyscrapers. ________________
5. Aren’t Aunt Emily a music teacher? ________________
6. Have you seen the newly opened apartment building? ________________
7. Who construct such large buildings as this one? ________________
8. Arsonists is the cause of this terrible fire. ________________
9. From the ashes of the burned block rises a new neighborhood. ________________
10. There is no Stanford White buildings here. ________________
11. A problem for the plumbing and electrical departments are vandals. ________________
12. Yes, vandals are always a problem. ________________
A. Correcting Agreement in Number

Underline the subject and verb of each numbered sentence. If there is an agreement error, write the subject and the correct form of the verb on the lines below. If the subject and verb agree, write Correct.

(1) Louis Sullivan, along with his partner Dankmar Adler, are considered the inventor of the skyscraper. (2) The ability to use steel girders by the end of the 1800s were a factor in this development. (3) No longer were a massive stone understructure necessary under the upper levels of a building. (4) From then on, the walls of a building could be considered just a “skin” covering the steel girders. (5) The decoration of the “skins” of Louis Sullivan buildings are usually one of their more noteworthy aspects.

1.________________________________________________________________________________

2.________________________________________________________________________________

3.________________________________________________________________________________

4.________________________________________________________________________________

5.________________________________________________________________________________

B. Making Subjects and Verbs Agree

In each sentence beginning below, underline the word that should be used as the simple subject in a sentence. Then supply a complete predicate, including a verb of your choice, to complete the sentence. Make sure your verb agrees with the underlined subject.

EXAMPLE: The children at the table are writing their book reports.

1. A box of pens

2. The principal of the high school

3. The house with the blue shutters

4. That firm of lawyers

5. The pieces of the puzzle
Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects

An **indefinite pronoun** does not refer to a specific, person, place, thing, or idea.

When used as subjects, some indefinite pronouns are always singular. Others are always plural. Others can be singular or plural depending on how they are used.

### Indefinite Pronouns

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### Singular or Plural

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Singular indefinite pronouns take singular verbs.

*Neither* of the books I wanted was in the library.

Plural indefinite pronouns take plural verbs.

*Many* of the videotapes are new.

*All, any, most, none, and some can be singular or plural. If the pronoun refers to a single person or thing, it takes a singular verb. If it refers to more than one person or thing, it takes a plural verb.*

*All of these books were approved. (The books are considered as individual items.)*

*All of the reading list was approved. (The list is considered as one quantity.)*

### Making Indefinite Pronouns and Verbs Agree

In each sentence, underline the indefinite pronoun used as subject. If the pronoun changes number according to the noun it refers to, underline that noun. Then find the verb. If the verb agrees with the subject, write **Correct.** If not, write the correct verb form.

**Example**

Some of the **speakers** was students. **were**

1. All of the **materials** in this section is nonfiction.
2. Both of the **librarians** are willing to help.
3. Each of the **librarians** has years of experience.
4. Some of the **magazines** were bound.
5. A few of the **finalists** has been chosen.
6. Nobody among the **students** is allowed to eat lunch in the library.
7. Several of the **students** has used the unabridged dictionary already.
8. Either of the **girls** were allowed in the storeroom.
9. Most of my **friends** are excited about the news.
10. Is any of those **science fiction books** by Isaac Asimov?
A. Making Verbs Agree with Indefinite Pronoun Subjects

In each sentence, underline the indefinite pronoun used as subject. If the pronoun changes number according to the noun it refers to, also underline that noun. Then find the verb. If the verb agrees with the subject, write Correct. If not, write the correct verb form.

1. Was any of the athletes in the speech competition? ____________
2. Most of the neighbors was out of town. ____________
3. Several of the students are named in the article. ____________
4. All of the customers was getting impatient. ____________
5. A few of the council members were unwilling to go on record. ____________
6. One of the quarterbacks have been out sick. ____________
7. Several of the authors has spoken to the group. ____________
8. Has any of my friends called? ____________
9. Both of the clerks were helping customers. ____________
10. None of the cookies is chocolate. ____________

B. Using Verbs with Indefinite Pronoun Subjects

On the lines, write the correct present tense form of the verb for each sentence.

(1) Some of my friends (help) in their neighborhood library. (2) If any of you readers (think) this is boring, you would be surprised. (3) One of my friends (know) plenty about computers. She helps patrons use the computerized card catalog and the computer programs. (4) Another of the volunteers (prefer) to help shelve books. (5) All of Rosina’s time (be) spent putting books back on the shelves.

1. ______________________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________________
4. ______________________________________________________________________
5. ______________________________________________________________________
Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects

A. Checking Agreement of Verbs with Indefinite Pronoun Subjects

Proofread this paragraph for errors in subject-verb agreement. Underline any verb that does not agree with the indefinite pronoun used as its subject. On the lines below, write the number of each sentence with an error and rewrite the sentence correctly.

(1) One of my favorite pastimes are going to the library. (2) All of the books, magazines, and CDs I can’t afford is there to borrow and use. (3) Some of the library materials is outside my areas of interest or understanding. (4) But many of the library’s holdings refer to areas I know or would like to learn something about. (5) Everything are there. (6) And everybody with a library card are welcome to use it.

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B. Using Verbs Correctly with Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects

In each sentence beginning below, underline the word that should be used as the simple subject in a sentence. Then supply a complete predicate, including a verb of your choice, to complete the sentence. Make sure your verb agrees with the underlined subject.

**EXAMPLE** Some of the books have been checked out.

1. Most of the cars
2. All of the tables
3. None of the coffee
4. Both of the visitors
5. Either of the drivers
6. All of the snow
7. Some of the scientists
8. Most of the pool
It may be difficult to tell whether the subjects in the following cases are singular or plural.

Collective Nouns  A **collective noun** names a group of people or things. Examples include *group, team, family, class,* and *majority.* When the members act together, the collective noun takes a singular verb. When they act as individuals, it takes a plural verb.

Usually, the majority **is** satisfied with election results. (acting together)
The majority of the voters **are** young people. (acting as individuals)

Singular Nouns Ending in S  Some nouns ending in -s or -ics appear to be plural but are considered singular. As subjects, these nouns take singular verbs. Examples include *news, measles, mumps, civics, mathematics, acoustics, physics,* and *molasses.*

For me, physics **is** difficult.

Titles  Titles of works of art, literature, or music are singular.

*The Thousand and One Nights* **is** a collection of stories.

Time and Amounts  Words and phrases that identify weights, measures, numbers, and time are usually considered singular. Fractions are considered singular or plural, depending on whether the subject is thought of as a whole or as separate objects.

Ten dollars **is** the usual ticket price. (singular)
Two days **is** the minimum time needed for delivering a letter. (singular)
Only three-fourths of the students **are** healthy. (plural)

Using Verbs That Agree with Problem Subjects

In each sentence, underline the subject and the form of the verb that agrees with it.

1. Four tablespoons of butter **is**, **are** what the recipe calls for.
2. The soccer team **has**, **have** won the championship.
3. The soccer team **is**, **are** putting on their cleats.
4. Sixty cents **is**, **are** the price of a program
5. Only half of the club members **is**, **are** present.
6. According to an old saying, half of a loaf **is**, **are** better than none.
7. Measles **is**, **are** a painful illness.
8. Twelve dollars **is**, **are** enough for two dinners.
9. *The Gleaners* **is**, **are** a peaceful painting by Jean-Françoise Millet.
10. The family **is**, **are** having a reunion this summer.
11. The family **is**, **are** coming in from all points of the compass.
12. Two tons **equals**, **equal** four thousand pounds.
13. Mathematics **is**, **are** my favorite subject.
14. *Twice-Told Tales* **was**, **were** written by Hawthorne.
15. Molasses **is**, **are** an ingredient in baked beans.
A. Using Verbs That Agree with Problem Subjects
In each sentence, underline the verb that agrees in number with the subject.
1. Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea (is, are) a novel by Jules Verne.
2. For my brother, physics (has, have) been more interesting than chemistry.
3. Two dollars (has, have) always been the maximum fine for children’s books.
4. Three-eighths of the students (is, are) boys.
5. Sixteen (was, were) his lucky number.
6. Three-eighths of the cup (is, are) filled.
7. For me, mathematics (is, are) a required course next year.
8. (Is, Are) three-eighths more than one-half?
9. Paul Gauguin’s Breton Girls by the Sea (shows, show) two barefoot girls.
10. Pediatrics (is, are) the specialty of doctors who treat children.

B. Correcting Subject-Verb Agreement
If the verb agrees with its subject, write Correct on the line. If it disagrees, write the correct form of the verb.

1. The class have decided where to go for its field trip.
   __________

2. Innocents Abroad were written by Mark Twain.
   __________

3. After her family’s reunion in Ireland, Siobhan’s family news has been international in character.
   __________

4. Four thousand dollars are a high price for a car in that condition.
   __________

5. The graduating class has received their caps and gowns.
   __________

6. One hundred sixty is divisible by four.
   __________

7. Two-thirds of the violinists is sick with the flu.
   __________

8. One-fifth of the graduating seniors have won scholarships.
   __________

9. Measles are a common childhood disease.
   __________

10. “The Three Little Pigs” are a classic children’s tale.
    __________
A. Proofreading for Subject-Verb Agreement

Proofread this paragraph for errors in subject-verb agreement. Draw a line through each incorrect verb. Then draw this proofreading symbol ^ next to the word and write the correction above the error.

Our class have been reading some books that are a kind of early science fiction. Mark Twain’s *The Prince and the Pauper* were really science fiction, based on the notion of time travel. Jules Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* were written about the same time as Twain’s work. Physics, at least with respect to underwater pressures and forces, are essential to the Verne work. Mathematics are important too. The crew of the *Nautilus* need to calculate underwater locations as well as water pressures.

B. Writing Sentences

Complete each of these sentences by adding a present-tense verb as described in the parentheses. Add any other needed words.

**Example** Ninety cents *is enough for a cup of coffee.*

1. My mother’s bridge club ____________________________________________________________

2. “The Three Billy Goats Gruff” ____________________________________________________

3. Social studies __________________________________________________________________

4. The football team ________________________________________________________________

5. Six dollars and fifty cents _______________________________________________________

6. *Romeo and Juliet* ______________________________________________________________