

Subject-Verb Agreement

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Grammar Notes

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Subject-verb agreement in English is generally quite logical. Singular subjects take a singular verb, while plural subjects take a plural verb. Plural subjects often end in -s, while singular subjects usually don't.

Like most grammar rules in English, there are many exceptions, from irregular plural subjects to singular subjects that end in -s and tricky pronouns and quantifiers. Let's take a look at the basic rules and some common exceptions.

A. Basic Rules

| # | Rule | Example |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Singular subjects take a singular verb. | <u>My dog</u> wants dinner. S V |
| 2 | Non-count subjects take a singular verb. | <u>Water</u> is essential for survival. S V |
| 3 | Plural subjects take a plural verb. | <u>The students</u> study every night. S V |

Memory Trick

Almost every sentence in the simple present tense needs an **-s**! If there is no -s at the end of the subject noun, use a singular verb that ends in -s. If there is an -s at the end of the noun, use a plural verb.

- A girl **walks** her dog.
S V
- Juice **tastes** good.
S V
- The books **are** all over the floor.
S V

Grammar Notes cont.

B. Other Cases That Follow the Basic Rules

| # | Case | Examples |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Gerunds take a singular verb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singing is my favorite hobby. Trespassing is a criminal offense. |
| 2 | Irregular plural subjects take a plural verb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People talk to me on the bus every day. The police are coming to stop the robbery. |
| 3 | Nouns joined by "and" take a plural verb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maria and Antonio have a baby. Snow and ice make driving dangerous. |
| 4 | When the subject includes a prepositional phrase, the noun that comes before the preposition agrees with the verb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>One of the leaders</i> was guilty. <i>Members of that group</i> are organizing a fundraiser. |

C. Cases That Don't Follow the Basic Rules

| # | Case | Examples |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | "Each" and "every" take a singular verb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each component is sold separately. Every reporter wants to do that interview. |
| 2 | The pronouns "everybody/everyone" and "nobody/no one" take a singular verb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone was tired after the long flight. Nobody knows what happened. |
| 3 | Non-count nouns that end in -s take a singular verb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Her good news was a relief. Mathematics is my first class of the day. |
| 4 | Subjects about <i>time, money, or distance</i> take a singular verb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five hours is enough sleep for me. One thousand dollars was my gift to him. |



Grammar Notes cont.

C. Cases That Don't Follow the Basic Rules cont.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 5 | Collective nouns (<i>family, team, staff, etc.</i>) usually take a singular verb, especially in American and Canadian English. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My family has three dogs and a cat. • Our team wins the competition every year. |
| 6 | When the subject includes certain quantifiers (<i>all, a lot, most, some, none, etc.</i>) and a prepositional phrase, the verb agrees with the noun after the preposition. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of my friends have their own cars. • A lot of rain is in the forecast. |
| 7 | When the subject includes a fraction or a percentage, the verb agrees with the noun after the preposition. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half of the pasta is vegetarian. • Only 25% of the survey results were favorable. |
| 8 | The subject "a number of" + noun takes a plural verb, while "the number of" + noun takes a singular verb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of articles deal with this topic. • The number of attacks is increasing. |

Exercise 1

MULTIPLE-CHOICE

Circle the correct form of the verb.

Ex. Every student in the class _____ a different language.

- a) speak
- b) speaks

1. Six miles _____ a long way to walk to school.
 - a) is
 - b) are
2. Louisa _____ two jobs.
 - a) has
 - b) have
3. Giovanni and Maria _____ a small apartment and three dogs.
 - a) has
 - b) have
4. The group _____ very large.
 - a) is
 - b) are
5. Her jacket and gloves _____ on the table.
 - a) is
 - b) are
6. Mrs. Izaguerra _____ early at work every day.
 - a) arrive
 - b) arrives
7. The coffee _____ very good.
 - a) is
 - b) are
8. Nineteen hundred dollars _____ a lot to pay to rent that old apartment.
 - a) is
 - b) are
9. Mr. Iwasaki _____ very well.
 - a) dance
 - b) dances
10. Almost 50% of the book _____ about the vice president.
 - a) is
 - b) are

Exercise 2

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Write the correct form of the verb to complete each sentence.

Ex. Half of the flowers in the garden _____ *are* _____ roses.
(is / are)

1. Most of the workers in that company _____ from the Chicago area.
(come / comes)

2. Shara _____ six brothers.
(has / have)

3. My brother and I _____ a lot of money when we go to the mall.
(spend / spends)

4. That football team _____ very good.
(is / are)

5. Two hours _____ the perfect length for a movie.
(is / are)

6. Roberto and his sister _____ from Venezuela.
(come / comes)

7. My mother's advice _____ usually old-fashioned.
(is / are)

8. Six people _____ in that small house.
(live / lives)

9. Physics _____ a difficult subject for me.
(is / are)

10. The police _____ many arrests on Saturday nights.
(make / makes)

Exercise 3

FIND THE ERRORS

Find one mistake in each sentence and rewrite the sentence correctly.

Ex. That police officer are always standing at the front of the school.

That police officer is always standing at the front of the school.

1. John work too much.

2. My sister never have time to talk to me.

3. Eight miles take 15 minutes on the highway.

4. She never cry when she has an argument with her boyfriend.

5. His sisters comes home very late every night.

6. One of my friend is from India.

7. His hair are short and blond.

8. The cheese are from France.

9. My brother and sister lives in a big house.

10. A lots of people in the class are from Thailand.

Exercise 4

COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

Complete the following sentences with a verb that agrees with the subject.

Ex. One of my favorite meals *is spaghetti with meatballs.* _____

1. Two hours _____

2. Watching TV _____

3. One of my best friends _____

4. Larissa and José _____

5. The counselor's advice _____

6. The news from northern Africa _____

7. None of the children _____

8. Every student in the class _____

9. More than 60% of the people in the country _____

10. Half of the cookies _____

Exercise 5

FIND SOMEONE WHO

Find someone who agrees with the sentences in the chart.
Walk around the classroom and ask your classmates questions.
Write your classmate's name if he/she answers "yes."

Ex. Is Friday the best day of the week?

| # | Sentence | Name |
|----|--|------|
| 1 | Friday is the best day of the week. | |
| 2 | Watching sports is boring. | |
| 3 | Two hours of studying on weekends is enough. | |
| 4 | Mathematics is your favorite subject. | |
| 5 | Coffee and tea are both delicious. | |
| 6 | Five miles is a long walk. | |
| 7 | Pizza is your favorite food. | |
| 8 | The number of quizzes in this class is too many. | |
| 9 | One hundred dollars is a lot of money. | |
| 10 | Going to the movies is fun. | |

Exercise 6

MULTIPLE-CHOICE

Circle the correct form of the verb.

Ex. A lot of the words in Chapter 6 _____ new.

- a) is
- b) are

1. Six blocks _____ not too far to walk.
 - a) is
 - b) are
2. Some of the vocabulary words in the lesson _____ difficult.
 - a) is
 - b) are
3. Most of that movie _____ place in China.
 - a) take
 - b) takes
4. Most of the people I know _____ from Europe.
 - a) come
 - b) comes
5. Half of the book _____ about soccer.
 - a) is
 - b) are
6. Two-thirds of the test _____ about Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.
 - a) is
 - b) are
7. About 40% of the teams _____ their games at night.
 - a) play
 - b) plays
8. All of my money _____ in my purse.
 - a) is
 - b) are
9. One of my friends _____ at the mall.
 - a) work
 - b) works
10. Some of the newscasters on Channel 47 _____ very young.
 - a) is
 - b) are

Exercise 7

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Write the correct form of the verb to complete each sentence.

Ex. Six blocks was not too far to walk.
(was / were)

1. Almost all of the air near the factory _____ polluted.
(is / are)

2. Some of Louisa's friends _____ cars.
(has / have)

3. Most of the teachers _____ the bus to school.
(take / takes)

4. Most of my brother's mail _____ in the late afternoon.
(come / comes)

5. Half of the boxes _____ full.
(was / were)

6. One-third of the program _____ about the war.
(is / are)

7. Seventy percent of the books _____ in Spanish.
(was / were)

8. Many of the dogs _____ fleas.
(has / have)

9. All of the windows _____ closed for the night.
(is / are)

10. Some of these TV shows _____ very interesting.
(is / are)

Exercise 8

FIND THE ERRORS

Find one mistake in each sentence and rewrite the sentence correctly.

Ex. My father's advice are always good.

My father's advice is always good.

1. He always go to church on Sunday.

2. In the morning, Inez drink two cups of coffee.

3. The professors at this college is nice, but they give us too much homework.

4. One of my teachers were sick yesterday.

5. Min Ju and her brother does not talk to each other.

6. Economics were my major when I was in college.

7. Every day offer a chance to learn something new.

8. The police is coming right now.

9. Farid have four brothers and one sister.

10. In the hot summer weather, 12 miles are too long to run.

Exercise 9

COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

Complete the following sentences with a verb that agrees with the subject.

Ex. Snowboarding *takes a long time to learn.* _____

1. Isabella's hair _____

2. A lot of students _____

3. None of the lawyers _____

4. Going to the beach _____

5. Two hundred dollars _____

6. All of the students _____

7. A lot of the words in Chapter 2 _____

8. Every person I know _____

9. Twenty-five percent of the book _____

10. A lot of the cheese in the refrigerator _____

Exercise 10

QUIZ

Circle the correct form of the verb.

- A lot of the coaches in the tournament _____ from Asia.
a) is
b) are
- Seventeen people _____ to this class.
a) comes
b) come
- The police _____ called immediately after the accident.
a) was
b) were
- One of my friends _____ hired for the job.
a) was
b) were
- Ana and Gustav _____ to get married.
a) wants
b) want
- A lot of the information in that article _____ wrong.
a) is
b) are
- Some of the singers on the program _____ very nervous.
a) is
b) are
- Every student in the class _____ homework every night.
a) does
b) do
- Mathematics _____ my best subject in school.
a) is
b) are
- All of the cities in southern California really _____ rain.
a) needs
b) need
- The news _____ about the World Cup.
a) is
b) are
- Looking online usually _____ me find answers to my questions.
a) helps
b) help

Grammar Assessment

Student / Group: _____

| Date | Level | Assessed By | Target | Skill |
|------|-------|-------------|------------------------|---------|
| | | | Subject-Verb Agreement | Grammar |

| Criteria | Achieved  | Achieved with Help  | Needs Improvement  |
|---|---|---|--|
| demonstrates correct usage of singular verbs with singular and non-count subjects | | | |
| demonstrates correct usage of plural verbs with plural subjects | | | |
| uses the correct verb form with common exceptions to the basic subject-verb agreement rules | | | |
| uses the correct verb form with nouns in a series | | | |

Notes




Self-Assessment

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Add check marks (✓) to show what you've learned in this lesson.

Name: _____

Date: _____

| Can I... | Yes (very well)  | Yes (with help)  | Not yet  |
|--|--|--|--|
| use singular verbs with singular subjects? | | | |
| use singular verbs with non-count subjects? | | | |
| use plural verbs with plural subjects? | | | |
| choose the correct verb form in cases that don't follow the basic rules on subject-verb agreement? | | | |

My Notes

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students go over the basic rules for subject-verb agreement with singular, plural, and non-count nouns. This lesson also reviews many common exceptions.

LEVEL: Int

TIME: 2-3 hours

TAGS: subject, verb, agreement, subject-verb agreement, nouns, count, non-count, uncountable, singular, plural, present, simple present, simple past, grammar, grammar exercises

Exercise 1

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. a | 3. b | 5. b | 7. a | 9. b |
| 2. a | 4. a | 6. b | 8. a | 10. a |

Exercise 2

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. come | 6. come |
| 2. has | 7. is |
| 3. spend | 8. live |
| 4. is | 9. is |
| 5. is | 10. make |

Exercise 3

- John **works** too much.
- My sister never **has** time to talk to me.
- Eight miles **takes** 15 minutes on the highway.
- She never **cries** when she has an argument with her boyfriend.
- His sisters **come** home very late every night.
- One of my **friends** is from India.
- His hair **is** short and blond.
- The cheese **is** from France.
- My brother and sister **live** in a big house.
- A **lot** of people in the class are from Thailand.

Exercise 4

Answers will vary. Monitor your students for correct subject-verb agreement. Possible answers include:

- Two hours is a long time to watch television.
- Watching TV is how I relax.
- One of my best friends is from Russia.
- Larissa and José are best friends.
- The counselor's advice is excellent.
- The news from northern Africa is not very good today.
- None of the children are wearing a jacket today.
- Every student in the class has a book.
- More than 60% of the people in the country work in the oil business.
- Half of the cookies were gone when I got to the party.

Exercise 5

You may want to review forming questions with the Be verb before your students begin (i.e., remind them to move "is" to the beginning of the question). Encourage follow-up conversation and monitor your students for correct subject-verb agreement.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Exercise 6

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. a | 3. b | 5. a | 7. a | 9. b |
| 2. b | 4. a | 6. a | 8. a | 10. b |

Exercise 7

- | | |
|----------|---------|
| 1. is | 6. is |
| 2. have | 7. were |
| 3. take | 8. have |
| 4. comes | 9. are |
| 5. were | 10. are |

Exercise 8

- He always **goes** to church on Sunday.
- In the morning, Inez **drinks** two cups of coffee.
- The professors at this college **are** nice, but they give us too much homework.
- One of my teachers **was** sick yesterday.
- Min Ju and her brother **do** not talk to each other.
- Economics **was** my major when I was in college.
- Every day **offers** a chance to learn something new.
- The police **are** coming right now.
- Farid **has** four brothers and one sister.
- In the hot summer weather, 12 miles **is** too long to run.

Exercise 9

Answers will vary. Monitor your students for correct subject-verb agreement. Possible answers include:

- Isabella's hair is long and curly.
- A lot of students are studying for the examination.
- None of the lawyers have jobs with the government.
- Going to the beach is fun to do with friends.
- Two hundred dollars is too much for a pair of shoes.
- All of the students are nervous about the test.
- A lot of the words in Chapter 2 are difficult.
- Every person I know is from a foreign country.
- Twenty-five percent of the book is about World War II.
- A lot of the cheese in the refrigerator is from England.

Exercise 10

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. b | 5. b | 7. b | 9. a | 11. a |
| 2. b | 4. a | 6. a | 8. a | 10. b | 12. a |

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Favorite*, *Favorable*, *Offense*, and *Counselor*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Favourite*, *Favourable*, *Offence*, and *Counsellor*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

For more practice with subject-verb agreement, try our Grammar Practice Worksheets lesson on There Is / There Are: <https://esllibrary.com/courses/88/lessons/1609>