Subject-Verb Agreement 1

The subject and verb of a sentence must agree in number. In other words, if the subject is singular, the verb must be singular, too. If the subject is plural, the verb must be plural. Study the examples below and in Write Source 2000 before completing the exercise below. (Turn to pages 88-89 and section 446.4 in Write Source 2000 for more information and examples.)

EXAMPLES

Compound Subjects:
Annie and her roommate are riding to the concert in our van.
(Compound subjects connected by “and” need a plural verb.)

Neither Annie nor her friends are riding home with us.
(With compound subjects connected by “or” or “nor,” the verb must agree with the subject nearest to the verb.)

Collective Noun Subjects:
Camp staff report for duty a week before camp begins.
(Staff is plural because each member will be coming from a different place.)

This staff is the best group of counselors in Camp Gichagoomie’s history.
(The members of the staff are referred to as one group, so the verb is singular.)

Directions Circle the correct form of the verb in the sentences below. The first sentence has been done for you.

1. A skunk and its enemy (is, are) soon parted.
2. The crew (eats, eat) in groups of four between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.
3. Beans and Barley Restaurant (serve, serves) great veggie burgers.
4. Neither the weather nor the traffic (was, were) to blame on the afternoon we missed our plane to Los Angeles.
5. Either math or pre-algebra (is, are) a requirement for eighth graders.

6. Congress rarely (complete, completes) all the items on the congressional agenda before it adjourns.

7. Cotton candy, carnival rides, and fireworks (makes, make) state fairs fun.

8. The Cornhuskers and the Jayhawks (is, are) bound to meet in the Big Eight conference play-offs this year.

9. Your mother, father, or legal guardian (is, are) required to sign your permission slip.

10. The Summerfest crowd (was, were) disbanding when the rain started.

11. Each twin (faces, face) unique challenges as one or the other discovers new interests and friends.

12. Neither the faculty nor the students (is, are) happy with the change in the schedule.

13. The committee (has, have) recommended improvements for school lunches.

14. Buses and bicycles (shares, share) the credit for reducing air pollution.

15. The little pig who built his house of bricks claimed that work and play (doesn’t, don’t) mix!

---

**Next Step** As a class, talk about examples of subject-verb agreement that seem tricky or confusing. Then write a tricky sentence—possibly similar to one you’ve discussed. Then write a rule that will help you remember how to figure out whether the verb should be singular or plural in sentences like the one you’ve composed.
Subject-Verb Agreement 2

Figuring out whether a verb should be singular (to agree with a singular subject) or plural (to agree with a plural subject) can be tricky! Check out the examples and rules on pages 88-89 and in section 446.4 in Write Source 2000 if you need additional guidance before completing the exercise below.

Examples

Subject Separated from the Verb:
I myself, not my friends, am responsible for the decisions I make.
(Make sure the subject and verb are in agreement.)

Subject Follows the Verb:
Piled on the table was a week's harvest of beans from Grandma's garden.
(Make sure the "true" subject and the verb agree.)

Indefinite Pronouns:
Everyone needs someone to talk to.
(The following indefinite pronouns require a singular verb: each, either, neither, one, everyone, anyone, everybody, everything, someone, somebody, anybody, anything, nobody, and another.)

Most of the ghost stories were scary, but none were truly frightening.
(The following indefinite pronouns can be either singular or plural: all, any, most, none, some. Check the noun the pronoun stands for to decide whether you need a singular or a plural verb.)

Directions
Circle the correct form of the verb in each sentence below. The first sentence has been done for you.

1. Everyone in a traditional Chinese family (has) have) three names, and each of those names is written using one character.

2. Each of the characters, which look like pictures, (stands, stand) for a particular part of the person's name.
3. The family name, followed by the person’s given name, *(is, are)* written first.

4. Some names *(has, have)* two or three brush strokes, while others have many.

5. A Chinese phone book, quite different from English, Spanish, or German directories, *(lists, list)* names according to the number of brush strokes in the character representing the family name.

6. The names represented by the simplest characters with only a few brush strokes *(is, are)* listed near the beginning of the directory.

7. Anyone with a name requiring many brush strokes *(has, have)* to look for his or her listing near the end of the directory.

8. Everybody who wants to look up friends in the phone book *(has, have)* to remember more than 3,000 individual characters!

9. Perhaps anyone who grows up learning each word with a picture *(finds, find)* remembering Chinese characters as easy as remembering how a word sounds.

10. There *(is, are)* a number of other languages that use characters instead of letters, but Chinese is the most complex.

---

**Next Step** If you have problems remembering which indefinite pronouns are singular and which are plural, create a list for each type. Then use the first letters of the pronouns in each list to create an acronym to help you remember them as either singular or plural.
Subject-Verb Agreement 3

Subjects and verbs must agree in number in your sentences. A singular subject needs a singular verb. (The book is hidden.) Plural subjects require plural verbs. (The books are hidden.) It's also important to know which indefinite pronouns need a singular verb. Pronouns like each, one, and everyone require singular verbs. (Turn to pages 88-89 and section 446.4 in Write Source 2000 for more information.)

EXAMPLES

Each of the boys hopes to find a fossil.

Either is capable of finding bones just like paleontologist Othniel Marsh.

Neither Jon nor Sherman expects to find a Brontosaurus bone.

Directions In the following short paragraph, underline the subjects with a single line and their verbs with two lines. The first sentence has been done for you.

For a long time, no one realized that the Apatosaurus and the Brontosaurus were the same dinosaur. Different sets of dinosaur bones were found in different places in Wyoming and were thought to be from different dinosaurs. The first skeleton discovered had no skull. The American scientist Othniel Marsh named it Apatosaurus. Two years later, scientists found a more complete skeleton. Marsh named it Brontosaurus. Soon, everyone realized that these two dinosaurs were the same. One of the names—Apatosaurus—has become formally accepted and is used by paleontologists. One of the names—Brontosaurus, the thunder lizard—seems to be more popular with the general public.