

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Every verb must agree with its subject: single subjects take singular verbs; plural subjects take plural verbs.

For all English verbs, the third person singular (he, she, and it) ends in “s” in the present tense.

	REGULAR VERBS	IRREGULAR VERBS		VERBS WITH IRREGULAR PRONUNCIATION	
	Walk	be	have	do	say
Singular	I walk	I am	I have	I do	I say
	You walk	You are	You have	You do	You say
	He walks She walks It walks	He is She is It is	He has She has It has	He does [duhz] She does [duhz] It does [duhz]	He says [sehzh] She says [sehzh] It says [sehzh]
Plural	We walk	We are	We have	We do	We say
	You walk	You are	You have	You do	You say
	They walk	They are	They have	They do	They say

RULES TO REMEMBER

EXAMPLES

Ignore the words or phrases that come between the subject and the verb. Always make the verb agree with the subject.	The <u>bed</u> of roses <u>needs</u> pruning. <u>Stan</u> , in addition to Karl, <u>is</u> responsible for the broken vase.
Subjects joined by <i>and</i> are plural unless they are referring to one thing.	<u>Stan</u> and <u>Karl</u> <u>are</u> responsible for the broken vase. <u>Macaroni</u> and <u>cheese</u> <u>is</u> my son’s favorite dish.
When subjects are joined by <i>either...or</i> , <i>neither...nor</i> , <i>or</i> , or <i>nor</i> , the verb agrees with the subject closest to it.	Neither the <u>lawyers</u> nor their <u>client</u> <u>was</u> pleased with the jury’s verdict. Neither the <u>client</u> nor his <u>lawyers</u> <u>were</u> pleased with the jury’s verdict.
The indefinite pronouns <i>each</i> , <i>either</i> , <i>neither</i> , <i>one</i> , along with the indefinite pronouns that end in <i>-one</i> , <i>-body</i> , or <i>-thing</i> , are singular.	<u>Everyone</u> <u>has</u> been delayed by the construction on Congress Avenue. <u>Each</u> of the Tae Kwon Do <u>students</u> <u>remembers</u> to bow to the instructor.
The indefinite pronouns <i>some</i> , <i>any</i> , <i>none</i> , <i>all</i> , and <i>most</i> can be singular or plural depending on the context of the sentence.	<u>Some</u> of the <u>milk</u> <u>has</u> spilled onto the floor. <u>All</u> of the <u>gumballs</u> <u>are</u> stuck in the machine.
Collective nouns emphasize a group as a single unit, so they should be singular unless the meaning is clearly meant to be plural.	The <u>class</u> <u>plans</u> a field trip to Lion Country Safari every year. The <u>jury</u> <u>are</u> debating amongst themselves.
Titles of works, company names, words mentioned as words, and gerund phrases are singular.	<u>Reviewing</u> monthly reports <u>is</u> very tedious. <u>A Tale of Two Cities</u> <u>is</u> a classic novel by Charles Dickens.
<i>Measles</i> , <i>mumps</i> , <i>news</i> , and words that end in <i>-ics</i> are usually singular.	Due to the wide availability of vaccinations, <u>measles</u> <u>is</u> no longer the danger to society that it used to be. <u>Athletics</u> <u>is</u> not my area of expertise.
<i>Who</i> , <i>which</i> , and <i>that</i> agree with the words they replace.	The music <u>student</u> <u>who</u> <u>doesn’t</u> practice should not expect to excel. Most of the <u>paints</u> <u>that</u> <u>dry</u> out quickly were purchased from the bargain store.
The subject can occasionally be located after the verb. This occurs most often with questions or sentences that begin with <i>there</i> or <i>here</i> .	<u>Does</u> the <u>piano</u> look better against this wall or in the corner? <u>There</u> <u>are</u> a few helpful <u>tips</u> to remember as you begin working in the store.

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Don't forget: students can always ask tutors or their teachers for an explanation of anything that's not clear.

Texts available to use in the SLC English Writing Lab:

<i>Grassroots with Readings</i> , Ninth Edition Susan Fawcett Chapter 6	<i>Evergreen, A Guide to Writing with Readings</i> , Ninth Edition, Susan Fawcett Chapter 28	<i>The Bedford Handbook</i> , Seventh Edition, Diana Hacker Pages 258-271
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Online:

[Subject Verb Agreement](#)

[Subject and Verb Agreement](#)

[Making Subjects and Verbs Agree](#)

[Subject-Verb Agreement](#)

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[Usage – Subject-Verb Agreement](#)

[Subject-Verb Agreement Quiz](#)

[Grassroots Companion Site](#)

[Evergreen Companion Site](#)

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PRACTICE

Directions: In each of the sentences below, choose the verb that agrees with its subject.

1. Everyone who completes this exercise (is, are) going to better understand subject and verb agreement.
2. The committee (meets, meet) today at noon in the conference room.
3. Kim, as well as Ronald, (plans, plan) to attend the seminar on organizing ideas.
4. The scissors that I bought yesterday (doesn't, don't) work very well.
5. We were supposed to leave an hour ago; where (is, are) the movers who promised such prompt service?
6. The members of the winning team (has, have) decided to postpone their celebration until the following weekend.
7. Mrs. Lambert is the teacher who (welcomes, welcome) her students and (shakes, shake) their hands as they walk into the classroom every day.
8. Neither Bob nor his roommates (cleans, clean) the kitchen regularly, so their apartment (has, have) begun to smell.
9. H.G. Wells' science fiction novel *The War of the Worlds* (has, have) been made into a movie several times since its publication.
10. Waking up early to exercise (is, are) a difficult practice to begin, but after exercising every morning for two weeks, I (finds, find) that I cannot go one day without it.