



SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Subject-Verb Agreement

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Subjects and verbs must agree in **number**. A singular subject requires a singular verb and a plural subject requires a plural verb.

1. Remember, unlike nouns which add -s to form plurals, verbs add -s to form the **third person singular present tense** (used in place of "he," "she," and "it").

CORRECT EXAMPLES: The boy runs with a lop-sided gait.
The groundhogs eat all of my sweet corn each year.

2. Some words that can be used as subjects **may look plural but are really singular**.

everybody	one	everyone	someone
each	somebody	anyone	nobody
anybody	everything	none	neither
nothing	either	no one	

The following words are considered plural.

several	few	many	both
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CORRECT EXAMPLES: Everyone wants to do well on the paper.
Several were turned in late.

Some words can **either be singular or plural** depending on whether they refer to a **count noun** (can form a plural) or **noncount noun** (abstract, general classification nouns that have no plural)

some	none	all	most	any
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CORRECT EXAMPLES: Some of the swimmers are not finishing the race.
Some of the food is spoiled.
None of the work was done today.
None of the students are going to the game.

3. Also, **be careful of prepositional phrases** that sometimes come between a subject and a verb. The verb must agree in number with the subject, not with the object of the preposition. In short, a prepositional phrase can never function as the subject of a sentence.

INCORRECT EXAMPLE: Each of the students **were** late.
Nobody of all my relatives **like** to eat my great-grandmother's ambrosia.

4. Even **when the subject follows the verb in a sentence**, they must still agree in number.

CORRECT EXAMPLES: Beside the fence **is** a climbing yellow rose bush.
In his closet **are** many reminders of his past.

5. **Compound subjects** joined by "and" require a plural verb.

INCORRECT EXAMPLE: John and Sammy **is** going to the lake.

CORRECT EXAMPLE: She and I **are** best friends.

6. However, if two subjects are considered one thing, the verb should be singular.

CORRECT EXAMPLE: Spaghetti and meatballs **is** my favorite meal.
Strawberries and ice cream **was** served as dessert.

7. A singular verb is also needed if the subjects are considered separately.

CORRECT EXAMPLE: Each of the students and each of the teachers **says** that the school is in need of new equipment.

8. Singular subjects joined by "or" or "nor" also require singular verbs.

CORRECT EXAMPLE: Either Don or Jim **is** going to be elected Student Government President.

9. If the subjects joined by "or" or "nor" are different in number, the verb should agree in number with the subject closer to it (or the subject after **or** or **nor**).

CORRECT EXAMPLE: Either the cat or the dogs **are** responsible for breaking my lamp.

10. **Collective nouns** such as "class," "family," and "crowd" require singular verbs when the word refers to the group as a whole and a plural verb when it refers to the individual members of the group.

CORRECT EXAMPLES: The crowd **is** acting agitated because rain has delayed the game.
The class **were** arguing among themselves.

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT EXERCISES

DIRECTIONS: Indicate whether proper subject-verb agreement is found in the following sentences by placing a **C** in the blank for **correct sentences** and an **I** in the blank for **incorrect sentences**.

- _____ 1. Everyone need his or her shots.
- _____ 2. All of the students recognizes that the final exam counts twenty-five percent of their grade.
- _____ 3. Each of the boys were given an award for saving the baby.
- _____ 4. Several of the papers were turned in late.
- _____ 5. None of the medicine was spilled when the box was dropped on the floor.
- _____ 6. None of the girls have to be home by ten.
- _____ 7. Neither Mark nor Todd has gotten the results back from the CLAST Test.
- _____ 8. Everybody in the band walk with a positive attitude.
- _____ 9. The cat wait for the mouse to come out of his hole.
- _____ 10. The driver of the truck want to stop at the next exit to rest.
- _____ 11. Many people has been through the White House for a tour.
- _____ 12. Once in a while she date a nice guy.
- _____ 13. Gardeners sprays their plants for insects.
- _____ 14. One of the gates are closed.
- _____ 15. Both of the windows are open.
- _____ 16. The horse is in the pasture.
- _____ 17. The boy want to go on a field trip.
- _____ 18. Several of us is going to the mall.
- _____ 19. Everything is going to be all right.
- _____ 20. He dances with much poise and grace.

ANSWER KEY FOR SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT EXERCISES

1. I--**everyone** is singular and should have the singular verb **needs**
2. I--**all** is plural and should have the plural verb **recognize**
3. I--**each** is singular and should have the singular verb **was given**
4. C
5. C
6. C
7. C
8. I--**everybody** is singular and should have the singular verb **walks**
9. I--**cat** is singular and should have the singular verb **waits**
10. I--**driver** is singular and should have the singular verb **wants**
11. I--**people** is plural and should have the plural verb **have**
12. I--**she** is singular and should have the singular verb **dates**
13. I--**gardeners** is plural and should have the plural verb **spray**
14. I--**one** is singular and should have the singular verb **is**
15. C
16. C
17. I--**boy** is singular and should have the singular verb **wants**
18. I--**several** is plural and should have the plural verb **are**
19. C
20. C

