**Subject and Verb Agreement** **Study Page**

**NUMBER**

***Number*** is the form of a word that indicates whether the word is singular or plural.

**When a word refers to one person, place, or thing, it is *singular* in number.**

**When a word refers to more than one person, place, or thing, it is *plural* in number.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Singular** | tree             I                pony                     goose                  deer |
| **Plural** | trees          we             ponies                    geese                  deer |

**REFERENCE NOTE:** Most nouns ending in -s are plural *(igloos, sisters*).

                                       However, most verbs that end in —s are singular*(sings, tries)*.

A verb should agree in number with its subject.

1. Singular subjects take singular verbs.

                  EXAMPLE **She plays** softball every day.

1. Plural subjects take plural verbs.

                        EXAMPLE **They play** softball once a month.

If a sentence has a verb phrase, the first helping verb in the phrase agrees with the subject.

EXAMPLES    **Sophie has** been practicing every day.

                         The **runners have**been practicing all week.

**A verb agrees with its subject in number.**

A subject and verb agree when they have the same number.

1. **Singular subjects take singular verbs.**

EXAMPLES:   The **fire flickers** in the soft breeze. [The singular verb *flickers* agrees singular subject *fire*.]

**Tina has** a role in the play. [The singular verb has agrees with the singular subject Tina.]

**He rides** his bicycle in the park.

1. **Plural subjects take plural verbs**.

EXAMPLES:    **Fireflies glow** at night. [The plural verb glow agrees with the plural subject *Fireflies*.]

                           The **bricks make** a sturdy path. [The plural verb *make* agrees with the plural subject *bricks.*

**We collect** newspapers for the paper drive.

If a sentence has a verb phrase, the first helping verb in the phrase agrees with the subject.

EXAMPLES:      **Janet ha**s played clarinet for three years.

        The **ducks ar**e flying south.

NOTE:  The singular pronouns *I*and *you* take plural verbs.

EXAMPLE:    **I start** with the baton, and **you begin** with the flag.

When a sentence has a verb phrase, the first helping verb in the phrase agrees with the subject.

EXAMPLES:    The **runner is** tired.

                          The **runners ar**e tired.

**Was Helen** running in the race?

**Were they** running in the race?

**PHRASES BETWEEN SUBJECT AND VERB**

**The number of a subject is not changed by a phrase following the subject.**

EXAMPLES:  The **girl** in the red shoes **rides** on my bus. [*singular subject and verb*]

                        The **caves** by the river **hold** all our supplies. [*plural subject and verb*]

                    The **poster** blown off the wall during the storm **was** replaced. [*singular subject and verb]*

                       Those **boys** having their hair cut **are** going to camp. [*plural subject and ver*b]

   Our **hike**to the mountain **was** fun.

                       The **hands** on my watch **glow** in the dark.

                       The **tomatoes** from your garden **ar**e delicious.

**COMPOUND SUBJECTS**

A***compound subjec***t is made up of two or more subjects that are connected by and, or, or nor. These connected subjects share the same verb.

**Subjects joined by a*nd* take a plural verb.**

EXAMPLES:  **Rain** and **hail** **were rattling** on the window.

**Frogs** and **newts hav**e moist skins.

**Prabha, Indira,** and **Mr. Singh**come from India.

**When compound subjects are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject nearer the verb.**

EXAMPLES:  A **swim** or a **game**of tennis **is** on the schedule this afternoon.

Either a green **salad** or fruit **slices are** the first course.

Neither**ice cubes** nor a **heating pad seems** to help.

The contractions *there's* and *here's*contain the verb *is.* These contractions are singular and should be used only with singular subjects.

EXAMPLE:  **There's**no **answe**r to that puzzle.

**Here’s** the **answer** to your question.

ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES: **Raoul**and M**ark have been playing** tennis all day.

        Either **Julio** or his **brother is singing**.

**Flowers** or **balloons make** a nice gift for a sick friend.

                                                 Neither **rain** nor **ants are spoilin**g our picnic.

                                                 Neither **ants**nor **rain is spoiling** our picnic.

**SUBJECT AFTER the VERB**

**When the subject follows the verb, find the subject. Then make sure that the verb agrees with it.**

The subject usually follows the verb on questions and in sentences that begin with*there* and *here.*

EXAMPLES:  Here **are**the **petitions** we collected.

**Have** the **Itohs become** citizens of the United States?

**Were** the **player**s tired?

There **are** six **floor**s in this building.

**AGREEMENT WITH DON’T AND DOESN’T**

**The word *don't*is a contraction of *do not.* Use *don't*with all plural subjects and with the pronouns I and *you.***

EXAMPLES:  **I don't** eat meat.           The **kittens don't** have mittens.

**We don't** litter.              **You don't** need a jacket today.

**The word *doesn't* is a contraction of *does not.* Use doesn't with all singular subjects except the pronouns I and you.**

EXAMPLES:  **He doesn't** understand.         **Greta doesn't** talk much.

**It doesn't** fly.                        That **toaster doesn't**work

**AGREEMENT WITH INDEFINITE PRONOUNS**

Personal pronouns refer to specific people, places, things, or ideas. A pronoun that does not refer to a definite person, place, thing, or idea is known as an *indefinite pronoun.*

**The following indefinite pronouns are singular:** *anybody, anyone, each, either, everybody, everyone, neither, no one, nobody, one, somebody, someone.*

EXAMPLES:  **Each** of the students **gets** a copy of the poem.

**Everyone thinks** the decision was unfair.

**Has either** of the classes **been** to St. Louis?

**The following indefinite pronouns are plural:** *both, few, many, several.*

EXAMPLES:   **Several** of the fish **had**bright spots.

**Both** of your hands **need** mittens.

**The indefinite pronouns***all, any, most, none*, **and** *some* **may be either singular or plural**.

The number of the pronouns *all, any, most, none*, and *som*e is determined by the number of the object in the prepositional phrase following the subject. If the pronoun refers to a singular object, the pronoun is singular. If the pronoun refers to a plural object, the pronoun is plural.

EXAMPLES:   **Most** of the laundry **is** washed. [*Most* is singular because it refers to one thing—*laundry*. The helping verb *is* is singular to agree with *laundry*.]

**Most** of the clothes **are** washed. [*Most* is plural because it refers to more than one thing—*clothes.* The helping verb *are* is plural to agree with *clothes*.]

**None** of the crew **has** started to paint yet. [*None* is singular because it refers to one thing—*crew*. The helping verb *has* is singular to agree with *crew*.]

**None** of the painters **have** started to paint yet. [*None* is plural because it refers to more than one thing—*painters*. The helping verb *have* is plural to agree with *painters*.]