



Agreement

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Subject-Verb Agreement

A subject-verb agreement error means that one part of your sentence is singular, and one part is plural. Singular means “one,” and plural means “more than one.” A sentence should be consistent in terms of number (generally all singular or all plural – not both).

Think of a sentence like a movie. The subject is the “star” of your sentence, the person or thing around which all action revolves.

A verb, on the other hand, is the actual action taking place.

Here’s an example: In the movie *Die Hard*, actor Bruce Willis crawls through a lot of ducts and air shafts.



Bruce Willis is the “star,” the one doing the action. That means he is the subject. “Crawls” is the action being performed – that means it is the verb.



Subjects



Subjects can be single nouns:

- The eight Dalmatians stood in line quietly.
- Steven forgot his coffee cup on the roof of the car.

Subjects can be two or more nouns:

- The Dalmatian and poodle had a puppy.
- Steven and Kristy were grumpy on the road trip because they had no coffee.

Subjects can be prepositional phrases:

Hint from my Grandma Callahan: A prepositional phrase is any time/place a mouse can run. For example, a mouse can run **in** the rain, **around** the tree, **under** the swing set, **with** its friends, **during** a snowstorm, **by** the sofa, **among** the daisies. One exception to this is the word “of.”

- The bag of toys fell off the table.
- A pizza with sausage gave me heartburn.
- Singing in the rain is my favorite activity.

Subjects can be pronouns:

A pronoun is simply a word we use to substitute for the actual person/place/thing we are referring to, such as he/his/him, she/hers/her, it, they/them and so on.

- They all went out for ice cream after the incredibly boring school play.
- She is just about my favorite person on earth.
- We couldn't believe the amount of snow that fell in just one hour!

Subjects

A Special Note about Collective Nouns

Collective nouns are words that describe a grouping of items or individuals. Here is a list:

army	class	corporation	family	minority	senate
audience	college	council	firm	majority	society
board	committee	department	group	public	team
cabinet	company	faculty	jury	school	troupe

In some instances, each member of that group is being discussed individually:

The **jury** (members) couldn't come to a single decision when **they** cast **their** different votes.

>>> In this case, each juror is making his/her own decision, so **plural terms** are used.

The football **team** (members) looked uncoordinated as **they** ran around the field in chaos.

>>> In this case, each football player is behaving independently, so **plural terms** are used.

In some instances, the group itself is what is being discussed because the group is behaving as a collective:

The **committee** voted to renew **its** liquor license even though the cost was high.

>>> In this case, the committee is acting as a unit, so the **singular terms** are used.

Last summer, my **family** talked about vacation spots and **it** decided to go to New Mexico.

>>> In this case, the family is acting as a unit, so the **singular terms** are used.

Pronouns

Pronouns are words we use in place of nouns. Here is a list of frequently used pronouns. Pronouns are divided based on number (singular or plural) and in some cases, based on gender (he and she versus it, for example).

all	few	many	one	that	we
another		me mine	other	their	what
any	he	more	others	theirs	whatever
anybody	her	most	our	them	which
anyone	hers	much	ours	themselves	whichever
anything	herself	my	ourselves	these	who
	him	myself		they	whoever
both	himself		several	this	whom
	his	neither	she	those	whomever
each		no one	some		whose
either	I	nobody	somebody	us	
everybody	it	none	someone		you
everyone	its	nothing	something		your
everything	itself				yours
					yourself
					yourselves

This list courtesy of <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/wordlist/pronouns.shtml>

Pronouns

A Special Note about Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns include the following words. Indefinite pronouns are **grammatically singular**, even though to your ear, they may sound plural. Because these words are grammatically singular, you cannot use plural verbs and pronouns (they, their, they're, them).

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

Here is an example: When everyone is finished with their Subway sandwich, they should throw their wrapper away.

>>> “Everyone,” “sandwich,” and “wrapper” are singular, but “their” is plural. Here are two revisions:

Fixes: When **everyone is** finished with **his/her** Subway **sandwich**, **he/she** should throw **his/her wrapper** away

>>>This version is all singular, so technically, it is grammatically correct (if annoying).

Fixes: When **all students are** finished with **their Subway sandwiches**, **students** should throw **their wrappers** away.

>>>This version is all plural because “all students” is now plural. The use of “their” is grammatically correct.

I suggest you avoid using indefinite pronouns and replace them with specific nouns. Also, write in the plural when possible so you can use plural pronouns like they/their/they're/them.

Verbs

Whereas nouns and pronouns describe things (people, places, objects, and so on), verbs describe the actions happening in a sentence.

Sometimes the verb describes an action or an event that is actually happening.

Sometimes, the verb describes a state of being, describes how something exists.

The following slide shows some examples of subject – verb – pronoun agreement.

Subject – Verb – Pronoun Agreement

When your subject is singular, you often will add an “s” to the verb form:

Carol **loves** going antique shopping.

Jasper **runs** around in the snow whenever he gets the chance.

He **works** until 11 p.m. and then drives 29 miles home.

When your subject is made up of two or more parts, look at how the parts are joined.

>>> If the words are joined with “**and**,” select a plural verb:

Carol **and** Pat **love** going antique shopping.

>>> If the words are joined with “or” or “nor,” select a singular verb:

Carol **or** Pat **loves** going antique shopping.

>>> Here is another version using the word “nor”:

Neither Carol **nor** Pat **loves** going antique shopping.

When a subject contains both a singular and a plural part joined by “or” or “nor,” the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is nearest the verb.

Neither Mom nor **my brothers** **love** going antique shopping.

Neither my brothers nor **Mom** **loves** going antique shopping.

Subject – Verb – Pronoun Agreement

Be careful when you have information that comes in between your subject and your verb.

- The kind old (crazy) lady in my neighborhood who owns all the cats are/is coming to our house for New Years day.
- My friend Cindy, who works with students with disabilities, adore/adores her job.
- My dog, which I got as one of my birthday presents, were/was very happy to see me when I returned home.
- My niece, but not my three nephews, are/is a big fan of gymnastics.
- The river that runs under the three bridges are/is at a scary level because of all of the rain.
- The football game that we watched in between dozens of commercials were/was boring.

Subject – Verb – Pronoun Agreement

The **kind old (crazy) lady** ~~in my neighborhood who owns all the cats~~ **is** coming to our house for New Years day.

My friend Cindy, ~~who works with students with disabilities~~, **adores** her job.

My dog, ~~which I got as one of my birthday presents~~, **was** very happy to see me when I returned home.

My niece, ~~but not my three nephews~~, **is** a big fan of gymnastics.

The river ~~that runs under the three bridges~~ **is** at a scary level because of all of the rain.

The football game ~~which we watched in between dozens of commercials~~ **was** boring.

