



What Is

Subject-

Verb Agreement? – Meaning and Definition

The term 'subject-verb agreement', just like the name suggests, refers to the agreement between the **subject** and the **verb**. This is mainly with reference to **singular** and **plural nouns/pronouns** that act as subjects. According to the Collins Dictionary, "concord refers to the way that a word has a form appropriate to the number or **gender of the noun** or pronoun it relates to. For example, in 'She hates it', there is concord between the singular form of the verb and the singular pronoun 'she'."

The general rule of subject-verb agreement according to Garner's Modern English Usage is "to use a plural verb with a plural subject, a singular verb with a singular subject. This rule holds true for most cases. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Check out the next section to learn how verbs have to be conjugated in order to agree with the subject.

Rules of Subject-Verb Agreement with Examples

The concept of subject-verb concord matters the most when using the **present tenses**. The **simple past** and **simple future tenses** have the same verbs used irrespective of the subject in the sentence. Knowing and following the rules of subject-verb agreement will help you write error-free sentences. Go through the following rules and also go through the examples to understand how each rule is applied.

Rule 1

The first rule is what we have already discussed – the use of a singular verb with a singular subject and a plural verb with a plural subject. The subject can be a **noun**, a **pronoun** or even a noun phrase. If it is a pronoun, the subject-verb agreement is done with reference to the **person of the pronoun**.

For example:

- *Rachel spends* her free time listening to music. (Singular subject with singular verb)
- *Blaine and Kurt play* the piano. (Plural subject with plural verb)
- *She likes* to have a dessert after every meal. (Third person singular pronoun with singular subject)

Rule 2

When using the 'be' form of verbs, there is an exception. In this case, the verb is used according to the number and person of the subject. Check out the following table to see how it works with different pronouns.

Person	Pronoun	Verb	Example
First person singular	I	am	I am confident.
First person plural	We	are	We are confident.
Second person singular/plural	You	are	You are confident.
Third person singular	He	is	He is confident.
	She	is	She is confident.
	It	is	It is amazing.
Third person plural	They	are	They are confident.

Furthermore, when used with other nouns and [noun phrases](#), the rule applies. The same works even with simple past, [present continuous](#) and [past continuous tenses](#) when the 'be' [form of verbs](#) are used as the principal verb/[helping verb](#). Check out the following examples to understand.

- *Santana is* a singer.
- *The girls are waiting* for you.
- *We were* happy with the review of our first movie.
- *Michael Jackson's songs are* still enjoyed by millions.
- *I was reading* the latest book by Rudyard Kipling.

Rule 3

The use of 'have' and 'has' in the [present perfect tense](#), the [present perfect continuous tense](#) and as a [main verb](#) is also dependent on the subject. All singular subjects use 'has' and all plural subjects use 'have'.

For example:

- *I have* a younger brother.
- *You have taken* the wrong cut.
- *Swetha has* a pet dog.
- *William Shakespeare has written* around 37 plays.
- *Finn has been waiting* to talk to you about the test results.

Rule 4

Compound subjects combined using the conjunction 'and' take a plural verb.

For example:

- *Krish and Radha are* on their way to the airport.
- *Caren, Sheela and Akash have completed* their assessments.

Rule 5

When more than one noun is joined by the conjunction 'or', the subject is considered to be singular and a singular verb is used.

For example:

- *Celery or spring onion works* fine.
- *Your mom or dad has* to be here in an hour.

Rule 6

Sentences with pronouns such as anybody, anyone, no one, somebody, someone, everybody, everyone, nothing and nobody are treated as singular subjects and will therefore use a singular verb.

For example:

- *Nobody has understood* anything.
- *Everyone was* happy with the outcome.
- *Nothing fits* me well.
- *No one finds* the movie interesting.

Rule 7

For sentences using 'either..or' and 'neither..nor', the verb should agree with the noun or pronoun that comes just before it.

For example:

- *Neither Ricky nor Gina is* here yet.

- *Either the teacher or the students have* to take an initiative to keep the classroom clean.
- *Neither the children nor their parents are* aware of the consequences.

Rule 8

When sentences have subjects like police, news, scissors, mathematics, etc. (nouns that are plural by default), the verb used should be plural.

For example:

- *The news of demonetisation shocks* the entire nation.
- *The police have been looking for* the culprits.

Rule 9

When a **negative sentence** is written, the 'do' verb is used and it has to match the subject.

For example:

- *The children do not like* working out trigonometry problems.
- *My father does not work* at the bank anymore.

Rule 10

Interrogative sentences also take the help of the 'do' verb. As far as the subject-verb agreement of interrogative sentences is concerned, the first verb ('be' verb or 'do' verb) has to be aligned with the subject of the sentence.

For example:

- *Do you* read thriller novels?
- *Doesn't she* know you already?
- *Is Tina* happy with the new house?
- *Were you* looking for me?
- *Has Sharon submitted* her final project yet?

Rule 11

When you have sentences that begin with 'here', 'there', 'this', 'that', 'those', 'these', etc., always remember that the subject follows the verb and therefore the verb has to be conjugated with reference to the subject.

For example:

- Here *is* your book.
- There *lies* your shirt.

- That *was a great movie*.
- There *have been many changes* in the timetable.

Rule 12

Abstract nouns and **uncountable nouns** are considered as singular subjects, so make sure you use a singular verb along with it.

For example:

- *Honesty is* the best policy.
- *Love makes* people do crazy things.
- *Good friendship keeps* your mind and body healthy.

Rule 13

When the subject refers to a period of time, distance or a sum of money, use a singular verb.

For example:

- *1267 kilometres is* too long for us to travel in half a day.
- *10 years is* not considered optimum to go on the water slide.
- Don't you think *1000 rupees is* a little too much for a portrait?

Rule 14

The next rule is based on the use of **collective nouns** as subjects. Remember that when you have a collective noun as the subject of the sentence, the verb can be singular or plural based on the sentence and the context.

For example:

- *My family is* settled in Australia.
- All *groups of participants have* arrived.

Rule 15

In sentences that have **adjectives** such as 'all', 'a lot of', 'lots of' or 'some' are used along with nouns to form a phrase that acts as the subject of the sentence, the verb is used according to the noun just before it.

For example:

- *All of my dresses have* become tight.
- *A lot of food is* left out.

- *Some of the books are* torn and damaged.

Rule 16

When a sentence begins with 'each' or 'every' as the subject, it is considered singular and so the verb has to be singular too.

For example:

- *Each student has been asked* to provide a consent letter.
- *Every teacher, parent and student is* expected to work together.

Rule 17

When you are using a sentence to express a wish or a sentence expressing a request, verbs are used a little differently from other sentences.

For example:

- *I wish I were* a bird.
- If *you were* here, I would not be sad.
- We request that *everyone make* their choices now.

Furthermore, go through the article on [tenses](#) to learn how verbs are conjugated according to the tense of the sentence.

Check Your Understanding of Subject-Verb Agreement

Go through the following sentences, analyse if the underlined verb agrees with its subject and make changes if necessary.

1. One of the plates are broken.
2. The seven children from Chennai has been selected for the final round of the quiz.
3. Neither the children nor the teacher has reached yet.
4. Sheena and her sister is here to see you.
5. A lot of food choices was given.
6. My parents lives in New Zealand.
7. Don't you think 4 days are a little too long?
8. Do anyone know where the lift is?
9. The little girl do not like mangoes for some reason.

10. You has brought all that I had asked for.

Here are the answers for the exercise. Go through them to find out how many of them you got right.

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Exercise 1 – Fill in the blanks with appropriate verbs

Go through the following sentences and fill in the blanks with the suitable form of the verbs given in brackets.

1. All my friends _____ here. (be)

2. I _____ the guitar. (play)

3. They _____ packed all that they will need for the trip. (have)

4. Samantha, Rachel and Sheena _____ eighth-grade students. (be)

5. Sam _____ Dutch. (speak)

6. It _____ good that you _____ people around here. (be, know)

7. Doctors _____ a problem and _____ a cure. (recognise, suggest)

8. The news of the accident _____ very disturbing. (be)

9. Manu _____ to school every day. (walk)

10. Brittany _____ beautifully. (dance)

Answers for Exercise 1

1. All my friends **are** here.

2. I **play** the guitar.

3. They **have** packed all that they will need for the trip.

4. Samantha, Rachel and Sheena **are** eighth-grade students.

5. Sam **speaks** Dutch.

6. It **is** good that you **know** people around here.

7. Doctors **recognise** a problem and **suggest** a cure.

8. The news of the accident **is** very disturbing.

9. Manu **walks** to school every day.

10. Brittany **dances** beautifully.

Exercise 2 – Correct the sentences

Read through the following sentences, locate the errors and correct them so as to have the verb agree with the subject.

1. She get very nervous every time she see a needle.

2. Artie use a wheelchair to move from one place to another.

3. Neither you nor your brother are a singer.

4. There are a box of chocolates.

5. Sylvester and her sister is going to the same school.

6. Rahul, along with his friend Aakash, has signed up for the debate competition.

7. Quinn wear a coat along with all her dresses.

8. Teenagers uses social media applications on a regular basis.

9. My dad and my mom is teachers.

10. She work as a journalist at the Indian Express.

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9. My dad and my mom **are** teachers.
10. She **works** as a journalist at the Indian Express.

Exercise 3 – Rewrite the sentences by using the right verb forms

Check out the following sentences, and rewrite the sentences by replacing the underlined verbs with the right form of the verb so that it agrees with the subject.

1. Neither your hair clip nor your shoes matches your dress.
2. The performance of William McKinley High School were great.
3. The little boy love mangoes.
4. Your heartbeat are not normal.
5. All of my toys has been donated.
6. Don't you think 150 kilometers are a little too long for us?
7. Here is the books you asked for.
8. The picture at the bottom look clear.
9. Mathematics are a subject that needs a lot of practice.
10. One of the children play the piano. Do you know who it is?

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