



# IIT Madras

## ONLINE DEGREE

**English I (Basic English)**  
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**Lecture 46**  
**Simple Sentences and Agreement Rules-1**

Good afternoon, today having after talking about phrase structure, word order, clause structure. Today we will talk about the structure of simple sentences in English and the most fundamental rule of English grammar. Actually, if I were asked to advise students to learn most important two rules first, then I would say learn the rule of word order in English and then learn the rule of subject-verb agreement or agreement rules in this language.

Today, we are going to look at the fundamental principles, the basic principles of the structure a simple sentence and how the rule of the agreement applies here to both nouns and verbs, as far as number of, as far as singular or plural is concerned. Here we go.

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- A simple sentence has only one clause.
- Therefore, that is the main clause of the sentence.

For instance, see the following.

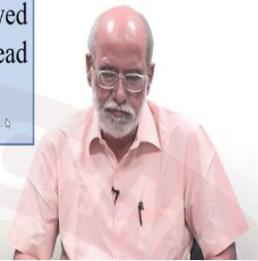
- a. It was Monday morning.
- b. Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes.
- c. He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar.



A simple sentence as we saw in the earlier unit has only one clause, and therefore, that clause is also the main clause of the sentence. Say, for instance, look at the following. 'It was Monday morning.' It is a clause and a simple sentence. 'Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes' it is a clause, and it is also a simple sentence, 'he considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar', the same thing again. Next.

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- d. After the delicious freedom of Saturday and Sunday, it was difficult to get into the Monday mood of work and discipline.
- e. He shuddered at the very thought of school: that dismal yellow building; the fire-eyed Vedanayagam, his class teacher; and the Head Master with his thin long cane.



But, look at these two, after the delicious freedom of Saturday and Sunday, it was difficult to get into the Monday mood of work and discipline. He, next sentence, 'He shuddered at the very thought of school: that dismal yellow building; the fire-eyed Vedanayagam, his class teacher; and the headmaster with his thin long cane'.

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The sentence:

- a. has only four words,
- b. has six words,
- c. has eight words,
- d. has 22 words, and
- e. has 28 words.



Now, sentence you know has only four words, b has only six words, you see words, the number of words varies from sentence to sentence, you can have four you can have 6, you can have a sentence only with two words, birds fly. You can have a sentence only with one word, come, go. So, you know number of words. a has 4, b has 6, c as 8, d has 22 and e has 28 words and yet, regardless of the number of words, all as I said in the earlier unit, if you

have only one verb with tense, then it is only one clause, and if it does not need to depend upon information outside the clause, then it has an independent clause, or it is a main clause of the sentence. Next.

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They have only one verb each with a tense. In

- a. we have “was”,
- b. has “was” once again,
- c. has “considered”,
- d. has “was”, and
- e. the last, has “shuddered”,



As I said, so for example, a has only one verb was, b again has was, c considered and d, again was, e shuddered, one verb, one verb only with tense and therefore, only one clause, one sentence. Go on.

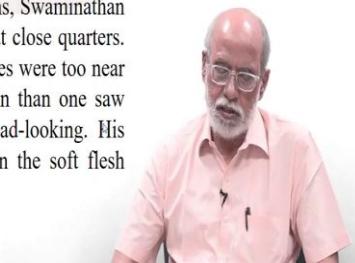
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## ACTIVITY



1. Look at the following paragraph. Identify simple sentences by underlining them.

He droned on monotonously. Swaminathan was terribly bored. His teacher's voice was beginning to get on his nerves. He felt sleepy. The teacher called for home exercises. Swaminathan left his seat, jumped on the platform, and placed his note-book on the table. While the teacher was scrutinizing the sums, Swaminathan was gazing on his face, which seemed so tame at close quarters. His criticism of the teacher's face was that his eyes were too near each other, that there was more hair on his chin than one saw from the bench, and that he was very very bad-looking. His reverie was disturbed. He felt a terrible pain in the soft flesh above his left elbow.



Now, you can look at the following paragraph and try and identify simple sentences here. Say, for example, the first sentence is a simple sentence. He droned on monotonously. Why is it a simple sentence, because it has only one verb with tense and it can stand by itself, it does not need information from outside. He droned on monotonously.

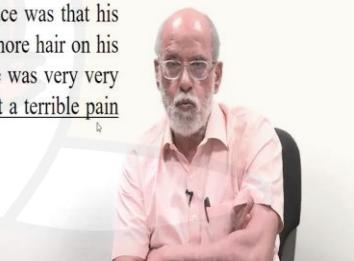
Now, look at other sentences within this paragraph and ask yourself which of these is a simple clause, underline that simple clause. So that later you can check your work with the given answers in this unit.

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## ANSWERS



He droned on monotonously. Swaminathan was terribly bored. His teacher's voice was beginning to get on his nerves. He felt sleepy. The teacher called for home exercises. Swaminathan left his seat, jumped on the platform, and placed his note-book on the table. While the teacher was scrutinizing the sums, Swaminathan was gazing on his face, which seemed so tame at close quarters. His criticism of the teacher's face was that his eyes were too near each other, that there was more hair on his chin than one saw from the bench, and that he was very very bad-looking. His reverie was disturbed. He felt a terrible pain in the soft flesh above his left elbow.



Next here is the answer take a look, go on.

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- All simple sentences have more than or only one Noun Phrase (NP) working as subject, but only one Verb Phrase (VP).
- They occur in a certain order in English, as we saw in an earlier unit of this module.
- They are also bound together by a rule of agreement. Verb (V) in VP should agree with Noun(N) in NP in terms of number.



So, coming back to the main point, all simple sentences are more than or only one noun phrase, the number of a noun phrase can even be larger, you can say all students and all teachers enjoy coming to school. So, you know you can have two noun phrases here all students and all teachers, you can have it differently.

'All day scholars along with those who live in the hostel enjoy school.' So, you can have two noun phrases, but within one clause you cannot have two verbs with tense. So, therefore, all simple sentences have or may have, only one or more than one noun phrases, working as subject generally, but they have only one verb phrase, this is important for us to remember.

And this noun phrase and verb phrase occur in a simple sentence in a certain order, as we saw in the earlier unit of this module, you know 'It was Monday morning'. So, it before was Monday morning, noun phrase before verb phrase. You cannot say 'was Monday it morning'. No. They are also bound together noun phrase, and verb phrase are also bound they do not only occur in an order, but they are also bound together by a rule of agreement, and this is what we will talk about in the rest of this lesson.

You know, they are also bound together by a rule of agreement that is what keeps them together and makes a sentence out of them. What is that rule, what is the rule of agreement, it says a verb that is v, in verb phrase that is VP, should agree with a noun that is N, in noun phrase that is NP, in terms of number, that is pretty simple. It says the verb should agree with the noun in number, noun comes first in a simple sentence. So, verb should follow the number of noun. Go.

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- If Noun is in singular number, the verb must necessarily be in singular number. You can only say the following :

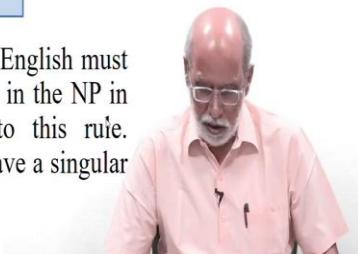
*Devadutt cooks rice.*



You cannot say the following:

*\*Devadutt cook rice.*

- This is ungrammatical. All verbs in English must agree with, must match, their nouns in the NP in number. There is no exception to this rule. "Devadutt", a singular noun, must have a singular verb "cooks", not cook.



Look at this thing, you know, if noun is a singular number, if noun is not plural, then no matter what your verb will also have to be in singular if the noun is singular. Look at this sentence, for instance, Devadutt cooks rice, one singular subject noun that is Devadutt, if it were two, Devadutt and Vijay Kumar then you cannot say cooks rice, then you will have to say cook rice, you will have to say Devadutt and other boys cook rice, you cannot say cooks rice.

So, that is the rule of agreement. Singular noun, singular verb, plural noun, plural verb you cannot rather than say Devadutt cooks rice, you cannot say something like the following. Devadutt cook rice, cook rice Devadutt. No. Rice cook Devadut. No, that is not possible. The only thing that is, possible is this order and this rule of agreement. If the noun is singular, the verb has got to be singular.

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Look at the following sentences.



- a. The sun rises in the east.
- b. Water freezes at zero degrees celcius.
- c. Man is mortal.
- d. Many birds fly together.
- e. Many girls in Africa and Asia are not allowed to go to school.
- f. Children love to play.
- g. Dogs are fighting.



Look at some sentences. Let us analyse them. Let us see if we got the hang of it. The sun, should it be rise or rises? Rises? Why? Because the sun is singular only one. If it were stars, then shall we say twinkles or twinkle? We will say twinkle, stars twinkle in the sky, stars twinkle at night. But because you know only one noun singular, the sun rises in the east.

Water again singular, water freezes at zero degrees Celsius. A man is mortal. If it were men, then you will say are mortal. If it were men and women or women and men, then it would be

are mortal. What if it is a single woman, a woman then is, is mortal. Many birds fly together, birds? Singular or plural? Plural, therefore, verb also plural.

This is an exceptionless rule in the grammar of English. Look at other examples, 'many girls in Africa and Asia is not allowed to go to school' will be wrong, you cannot say girls and then say 'is' that is not allowed, there is no combination of that kind. The only way you can say that is the way given here, many girls that is more than one in Africa and Asia are not allowed to go to school. Children, what is the singular form of children? Child. So, it is not, if it were child what would we have, child loves to play, but because it is plural, children, so what do we say 'children love to play'.

Because you know children is plural and therefore the verb should also be plural, which is love in this case. 'Dogs are fighting', who are fighting? 'Dogs are fighting', complete in themselves. Dogs is in plural. So, the auxiliary there has been selected is not is you cannot say, 'dogs is fighting'. That will be ridiculous, that will be funny. You know, it would not look standard, it would not sound standard, the only way you can say that is the way given here, dogs are fighting.

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- h. Freedom fighters were ordinary people with great love for the country.
- i. Very young babies sleep for up to 16 hours a day.
- j. Mahatma Gandhi was popular also among the British.
- k. India has a history of great literature in all languages.
- l. All kinds of prophets have been respected in India.



Next, freedom fighters, singular or plural? Plural, freedom fighters. So, therefore, the auxiliary verb that will attach there is also plural. Auxiliary verbs, 'freedom fighters who were ordinary people with a great love for the country'. It is this love that drove them. So, if I

have a sentence like, it is this love that drove them, then it has two clauses, it is this love the next that drove them.

So, you know, count the number of simple sentence, tenses with present and you will know the number of clauses and once you know the number of clauses, ask yourself second mechanical question. Do I have two sentences, but only two clauses? Or three clauses? How would you know?

Again, very simple, you know, you look at the sentence, see how many verbs, how many of these verbs making a clause, do not need information from outside the clause, then that is the main clause. Otherwise, it is a subordinate clause, and you know, you have it would not go without the main clause.

Next is very young babies, very young babies, singular or plural? Plural, obviously excuse me, and therefore, the verb is also plural sleep. So, very young babies sleep for up to 16 hours a day. Mahatma Gandhi, no matter what a big man, what a big prophet, he is still one person. So, what do we do, we use the singular verb for him Mahatma Gandhi was popular not only among the Indians but also among the British.

India has a history of literature or literatures in all languages. So, the letter complements are in plural, literatures, languages, but because the subject of the noun India is in singular, so the verb in this case was, is in the past tense, making it a sentence. All kinds of prophets have been respected in India.

Once again, the subject noun phrase is all kinds of prophets; it is, of course in plural. Then, the following verb must also be plural. You cannot say all kinds of prophets has been respected in India. No, that may be ungrammatical it has to be all kinds of prophets have been respected in India. Next.

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In all of these sentences, the underlined verb above matches its noun in number; the verb is in singular number, if its noun is in singular number.

- d. Birds fly
- e. Girls... are
- f. Children love....
- g. Dogs are...
- h. Freedom fighters were...
- i. Very young babies sleep...
- l. ...prophets have...



Now, in all of these sentences as I said, you know earlier the underlined verb ever matches its noun in number, the verb is in singular number if it is noun is in singular number. So, for example, birds singular therefore fly, you cannot say birds flies or flies bird. No, that will be incorrect. 'Girls are' correct girls plural are plural, 'children love', 'children' plural what is the singular form of children, child. So, children love, but if it were child, then you would say child loves.

Dogs are, freedom fighters were, very young babies sleep, prophets have. All of these people might or might not have been there without the English, but the point here is India and many other countries in Africa, and Asia have learners who began learning this language, English language not in their early childhood, but a little later when many people say language learning faculty start atrophying no use and therefore no health.

So, what you can do is, for those learners like us, who have begun learning late, we can do plenty of these exercises, take nouns and verbs out and see if they match, how they match and once you have done this kind of thing, you will have a perfect grip on the language, you will make no mistake at all because there are no other rules other than these two, where you cannot take liberty. Next.

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Nouns in English are plural generally when they take "s", or "es" after them, but verbs become plural when they take no "s" or "es" after them.

See the following table for better illustration.

Singular Nouns	Singular Verbs
The sun	Rises..
Water	Freezes..
Man	Is..
Mahatma Gandhi	Was..
India	Has..



You know to help you, we have made it easier by putting them in the top and in the form of a table. The only peculiar thing is, or the one difficult thing here is, how do you know that noun is plural, you know because generally speaking 's' or 'es' is added boys, ladies, dogs, cats. So, either s or es are added, there may be a word exceptionally one or two other things. But by and large, you know plural noun as s es attached to it.

Singular noun has no such thing, you cannot say suns you just say the sun, but you say stars you add s, you say loaves of office, prophets of office. So, loaf becomes plural as loaves, and then f changes to v, f changes to v and es is added, s es.

So, you know in nouns s, es is a plural marker. But in verbs, s, es is a singular marker. That is why you do not say 'the sun rise', you say 'the sun rises'. The sun is in singular, and singular verb takes s water is in singular, and the singular verb takes s or es. So, you say 'water freezes' you say 'man is', you do not say 'man are', you say man has you do not say man have, these are the tricks. Why do we do so? Because when the noun is singular, the verb is also compulsorily becoming singular.

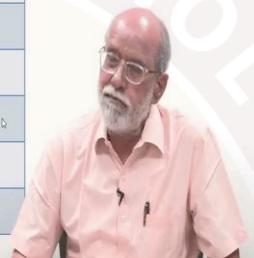
Mahatma Gandhi, as I said earlier, no matter how big a man, but is still one unit. Mahatma Gandhi, regardless of social status, in language, in sciences, one person is singular, even if he is God. So, we say God was, God is, God is great. We do not say God are great. But when we add s to it and make plural, which is gods, then we say 'our'.

So, you know these are pretty simple rules. The only thing is that whereas s and es make a singular verb, they make a plural noun. This part you have to understand through some exercise, look at the next table.

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- Plural nouns take “:s”, “es”, “have”, but plural verbs just go in their neutral form as given in dictionaries. See the table below for better comparison.

Plural Nouns	Plural Verbs
Birds	fly
Girls..	are
Children	Love..
Dogs	Are..
Freedom fighters	Were..
Very young babies	Sleep..
...prophets	Have..



Plural nouns have taken s then verbs do not take s, es. So you have birds, girls children, but you know you have fly, are, Love, Are, dogs Are, freedom fighters were, young babies sleep prophets have, you know this is how it goes, we are going to give you additional exercises.

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- **Note:** There is, however, an exception. Pronouns like “I” and “You”, even when singular, take plural verbs in English. They take verbs without “s”, “es”; they take “have”. In the past tense, however, you say “I was”, but “you were”.



There is however and a small a little exception you know, box which we have not talked about, that is the pronoun I and You, I for me is only one person it is singular, the plural of I

is we. You can be both singular and plural. Earlier about 100 years ago, you used to be only plural, but now in English, you is both singular and plural.

So, even if it is singular with I and You, we use a plural verb. We say, 'I have a book', 'you have an appointment', 'I come daily to take lessons in grammar', 'you come daily to give me lessons of grammar'. So, you know though I and You, I definitely a one only singular number, you can be both singular and plural but even when it is singular, you and I take plural verbs that is without s or es.

They take have, they do not take has, you say John has, Mary has, Ruth has, Radha has, Shri Krishna has, but you do not say 'I has', you say, 'I have an appointment', 'I have a train to catch', 'I have a talk to give'. So, in the past and similarly, you know, you with I you have to say was but with you, you can see where because you know you is both singular and plural.

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## ACTIVITY

2. Look at the following sentences. Verbs have been removed and placed in brackets after each sentence. In each sentence, there is, therefore, a blank. Fill in these blanks with the correct form of the given verb.



Not very difficult to do take a text somewhere gap it and see if you are able to do it right. We have done some exercise for you here go next. Next.

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a. I .... to inform you that my son Swaminathan of the First Form, A section, was assaulted by his Scripture Master yesterday in a fanatical rage.(beg)

b. I ... that he is always most insulting and provoking in his references to the Hindu religion. (**hear**) It is bound to have a bad effect upon the boys. This is not the place for me to dwell upon the necessity for toleration in these matters. I am also informed that when my son got up to have a few doubts cleared, he was roughly handled by the same teacher. His ears were still red when he came home last evening.



I have removed all verbs after I and put them in the brackets at the end of the sentence. Now, how will you fill them in? Would you say, 'I beg to inform you' or would you say, 'I begs to inform you' that is what you have to do. Similarly, in B, what do you say I hear that he is always most insulting or I hears that he you know, this is the exercise here.

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c. If it is so, you may kindly inform us as we are quite willing to withdraw our boys and send them elsewhere. I may remind you that Albert Mission School is not the only school that this town, Malgudi,..... .(possess)

d. I..... you will be kind enough to inquire into the matter and favour me with a reply. (**hope**)

e. If not, I ..... to inform you, I shall be constrained to draw the attention of higher authorities to these Unchristian practices. (**regret**)



Now, look at this sentence. Once again, what kind of verb would you give singular or plural or the verb we take s or es, look at the sentence. 'I may remind you that Albert Mission School is not the only school that this town Malgudi' possess or possesses. Look at the answer later. I hope or hopes? Hope. If not I regrets or regret, regrets or regret. To inform you etc etc. Go next.

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## ANSWERS



- a. I **beg** to inform you that my son Swaminathan of the First Form, A section, was assaulted by his Scripture Master yesterday in a fanatical rage.
- b. I **hear** that he is always most insulting and provoking in his references to the Hindu religion. It is bound to have a bad effect upon the boys. This is not the place for me to dwell upon the necessity for toleration in these matters. I am also informed that when my son got up to have a few doubts cleared, he was roughly handled by the same teacher. His ears were still red when he came home last evening. The one conclusion that I can **come** to is that you do not want non-Christian boys in your school.



See the answer. So, you can say, you should say I beg to inform you. I hear that he is always.

Next.

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- c. If it is so, you may kindly inform us as we are quite willing to withdraw our boys and send them elsewhere. I may remind you that Albert Mission School is not the only school that this town, Malgudi **possesses**.
- d. I **hope** you will be kind enough to inquire into the matter and favour me with a reply.
- e. If not, I **regret** to inform you, I shall be constrained to draw the attention of higher authorities to these Unchristian practices.



Malgudi possesses, not possess. I hope not hopes. I regret not regrets. You know, so easy.

Next, actually, like I have been saying you know same thing here. These principles are very easily learnt and more easily forgotten. To remember them for eternity. The only thing you have to do is, do plenty of exercises.

Take a paragraph randomly from any book, any audio text, any video clip and remove all verbs from there and replace them, you know bring them back. If you are able to do, have for I, has for he, she, it, you got it. If you are able to say hope with I and hopes with he, you got

it. You do not have to do anything, and that will give you a kind of confidence, a perfection which only those can enjoy who have got it. Good luck, and thank you.

