

Subject – Verb Agreement

RULE 1 – A verb agrees with its subject in number. Singular subjects take singular verbs:

The car stays in the garage.

The flower smells good.

RULE 2 – The number of the subject (singular or plural) is not changed by words that come between the subject and the verb.

One of the eggs is broken.

RULE 3 – Some subjects always take a singular verb even though the meaning may seem plural. These subjects always take singular verbs:

Each, someone, either, anyone, neither, nobody, one, somebody, no one, anybody, everyone, everybody

Someone in the game was hurt.

RULE 4 – The following words may be singular or plural, depending upon their use in a sentence, some, any, all, most.

Most of the news is good. (singular)

Most of the flowers were yellow. (plural)

All of the pizza was gone. (singular)

All of the children were late. (plural)

RULE 5 – Subjects joined by and are plural. Subjects joined by or or Nor take a verb that agrees with the last subject.

Bob and George are leaving.

Neither Bob nor George is leaving.

When one of the subjects joined by or or nor is plural, the verb must be plural, and the plural subject should be placed nearest the verb:

Neither Bob nor his friends are leaving.

Neither the chairman nor the directors are present.

Neither my chickens nor my duck sleeps outside.

Neither my duck nor my chickens sleep outside.

RULE 6 – There and here are never subjects. In sentences that begin with these words, the subject is usually found later on in the sentence.

There were five books on the shelf. (were, agrees with the subject book).

Here is the report you wanted. (Is agrees with subject report)

RULE 7 – Collective nouns may be singular or plural, depending on their use in the sentence.

A collective noun is a noun used to name a whole group.

Following are some common examples:

Army, crowd, orchestra, audience, public, class, team, committee, troop.

The orchestra is playing a hit song. (Orchestra is considered as one unit—singular.)

RULE 8 – Expressions of time, money, measurement, and weight are usually singular when the amount is considered one unit.

Five dollars is (not are) too much to ask.

Ten days is (not are) not nearly enough time.

On occasion, however these terms are used in the plural sense:

There were thirty minutes to countdown.

RULE 9 – Some nouns, while plural in form, are actually singular in meaning.

Mathematics is (not are) an easy subject for some people.

Physics is (not are) taught by Prof, Baldwin.

Mumps, economics, social studies, measles, statistics, civics, physics, news etc.

RULE 10 – Don't and Doesn't must agree with the subject.

Use doesn't after he, she, it.

Doesn't he (not don't) know how to sail?

They don't (not doesn't) make movies like that anymore