**Subject-verb Agreement-1**

Being able to find the right subject and verb will help you correct errors of subject-verb agreement.

**Basic Rule:** A singular subject (she, Bill, car) takes a singular verb (is, goes, shines), whereas a plural subject takes a plural verb.

**Example**: The list of items is/are on the desk.  
 If you know that “list” is the subject, then you will choose “is” for the verb.

**Watch the subject-verb agreement in your sentences when...**

## **When the subject follows the verb**

When the subject follows the verb (especially in sentences beginning with the expletives "there is" or "there are"), special care is needed to determine the subject and to make certain that the verb agrees with it.

On the wall were several posters.

There are many possible candidates.

There is only one good candidate.

In sentences beginning with **here** or **there**, the true subject follows the verb.

**Examples:**

*There are four hurdles to jump.* *There is a high hurdle to jump.* *Here are the keys.*

## **When words like "each" are the subject**

Following words when used as subjects take singular verbs

* **each, either, neither**
* **another**
* **anyone, anybody, anything**
* **someone, somebody, something**
* **one, everyone**
* **everybody, everything**
* **no one, nobody, nothing**

Do not be confused by prepositional phrases which come between a subject and its verb. They generally do not change the number of the subject.

Each takes her turn at rowing.Neither likes the friends of the other.

Everyone in the fraternity has his own set of prejudices.

Each of the rowers takes her turn at rowing.

Every one of the fraternity members has his own set of prejudices.

**EXCEPTION :** If a parenthetical “each” follows a plural noun or pronoun, the verb should be as per the plural noun preceding “each”.

The **members each feel their** responsibility. **They each have their own** problem.  
 A subject will come before a phrase beginning with a preposition such as **in, of, on** etc. This is a key rule for understanding subjects. The word **of** is the culprit in many, perhaps most, subject-verb mistakes.

**Incorrect:** A bouquet of yellow roses lend color and fragrance to the room.

**Correct:** A bouquet of yellow roses lends . . . (bouquet lends, not roses lend)

Do not be misled by a phrase that comes between the subject and the verb. The verb agrees with the subject, not with a noun or pronoun in the phrase.

**One**of the boxes **is**open

**The people** who listen to that music **are**few.

**The team captain**, as well as his players, **is**anxious.

**The book**, including all the chapters in the first section, **is**boring.

**The woman** with all the dogs **walks**down my street.

## **When words like "none" are the subject**

Following indefinite pronouns may take either singular or plural verbs, depending on the context.

* **none, any, all, more, most, some ( SANAM )**

Some of the dollar was spent.

Some of the dollars were spent.

**Note: here the prepositional phrase does affect the subject. It tells you whether you are talking about a part of one thing (singular) or about a number of things (plural).**

The only time when the object of the preposition factors into the decision of plural or singular verb forms is when noun and pronoun subjects like "some," "half," "none," "more," or "all" are followed by a prepositional phrase. In these sentences, the object of the preposition determines the form of the verb.

**All of the chicken *is* gone. All of the chickens *are* gone.**

So, words that indicate portions—e.g., a lot, a majority, some, all—we are guided by the noun after of. If the noun after of is singular, use a singular verb. If it is plural, use a plural verb.

**Examples:**A lot of the ***pie***has disappeared.A lot of the ***pies*** have disappeared.A third of the ***city*** is unemployed.A third of the ***people*** are unemployed.All of the ***pie*** is gone.All of the ***pies*** are gone.Some of the ***pie*** is missing.Some of the ***pies*** are missing.

## **When the subjects are joined by "and"**

Subjects joined by "and" take plural verbs.

**Be aware: phrases such as "in addition to," "as well as," and "along with" do not mean the same thing as "and." When inserted between the subject and the verb, these phrases do not change the number of the subject.**

Both Tom and Jane have English 167 papers due on Tuesday.

Tom, as well as Jane, has an English 207 paper due Tuesday.

## **When singular subjects are joined by words like "or"**

Singular subjects joined by "or," "nor," "either . . . or," or "neither. . . nor" take a singular verb. Neither/Either +of+ plural noun/pronoun demands singular verb

Either the man or his wife knows the truth of the matter.

Neither money nor power was important any longer.

Either of the options is good.

## **When one subject is singular and one plural**

If one subject is singular and one is plural, the verb agrees with the nearer subject.

Neither the television nor the radios work.

Neither the radios nor the television works.

## **When a linking verb is used**

A linking verb ("is," "are," "was," "were," "seem" and others) agrees with its subject, not its complement.

Joe's favorite dessert is blueberry muffins.

Blueberry muffins are Joe's favorite dessert.

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## **Set 1**

## **Pick the correct sentence/s:**

1. Each of the students have certain doubts about the available career options.
2. We each are invited to a party around Christmas.
3. A group of passengers has complained against the unruly bus driver.
4. I am upset with one of my cousin because of her behavior.
5. The captain along with his team members is going to come to the official party.
6. Some of the money was spent on frivolous items.
7. None of the eggs are rotten.
8. A fourth of the ground are wet.
9. Neither John nor his parents is rich.
10. Books are my only friend.

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## **Set 2**

## **Pick the correct sentence/s:**

1. There is a man and a child in the car.
2. Near the cloak-tower stands tall buildings.
3. Most of my courage come from my belief in God.
4. The majority of the options has already been discussed.
5. Roger as well as Steve work in New York.
6. Neither of them was selected in the team.
7. Neither the students nor the teacher are interested in the project.
8. Everyone should do their work.
9. None of my friend has invited me to the New Year Party.
10. Here comes Peter and his father.

**Subject-verb Agreement-2**

**When a collective noun is used**

A  collective noun  is a word that represents a group of persons, animals or things. For e.g. audience, committee, company, council, army, police, society, board, department, cabinet etc. the following rules govern the form of verb to be used with a collective noun.

**When a group acts as a unit, the verb should be singular.**

The **committee has** agreed to submit its report on Friday.  
The **board of directors meets** once in a month.  
The **firm is one of the most** reputed in the country.  
The **majority has** made its decision.

**When the members of the group are thought of as acting separately, the verb should be plural.**

The **teams are arguing** over who should be the captain (individual members in the team are arguing).  
The **committee were** not in agreement on the action to be taken.  
The **audience were** cheering and laughing, even crying.

Collective nouns like "herd," "senate," "class," and "crowd," usually take a singular verb form.

**When a relative pronoun is used as a subject of an adjective clause**

A relative pronoun ("who," "which," or "that") used as a subject of an adjective clause takes either a singular or plural verb in order to agree with its antecedent.

A vegetable that contains DDT can be harmful.

(Adjective clause modifying the singular noun "vegetable.")

Vegetables that contain DDT can be harmful.

(Adjective clause modifying the plural noun "vegetables.")

Mary is one of the students who have done honor to the college.

(Adjective clause modifies the plural noun "students." "Students" is the antecedent of "who."

In the above sentence Mary is just one of the students. So at least two students have done honor to the college.

Compare that to:

Mary is the only one of our students who has achieved national recognition.

In this case, "one," not "students," is the antecedent of "who."

Compare to the sentence above:

Of all our students, Mary is the only one who has achieved national recognition.

## **When a measurement is displayed**

Use a singular verb with distances, periods of time, sums of money, etc., when considered as a unit. **Examples:** Five years ***is*** the maximum sentence for that offense.  
Three miles ***is*** too far to walk. Ten dollars ***is*** a high price to pay.**BUT**Ten dollars (i.e., dollar bills) ***were*** scattered on the floor.

## **When a CONDITIONAL or SUBJUNCTIVE comes in the picture**

The word **were** replaces **was** in sentences that express a wish or are contrary to fact:

**Example:** If Joe ***were*** here, you'd be sorry.

Shouldn't Joe be followed by was, not were, given that Joe is singular? But Joe isn't actually here, so we say were, not was. The sentence demonstrates the **subjunctive mood**, which is used to express things that are hypothetical, wishful, imaginary, or factually contradictory. The subjunctive mood pairs singular subjects with what we usually think of as plural verbs.

**Examples:** I wish it ***were*** Friday.She requested that he ***raise*** his hand.

In the first example, a wishful statement, not a fact, is being expressed; therefore, were, which we usually think of as a plural verb, is used with the singular it. (Technically, it is the singular subject of the object clause in the subjunctive mood: it were Friday.)  
Normally, he raise would sound terrible to us. However, in the second example, where a request is being expressed, the subjunctive mood is correct.

**When a gerund is the Subject**

When gerunds ( verb+ing working as a noun) are used as the subject of a sentence, they take the singular form of the verb; but, when they are linked by "and," they take the plural form. **Example**: Standing in the water *was* a bad idea.

Swimming in the ocean and playing drums*are* my hobbies.

**When “*A NUMBER OF”* or “*THE NUMBER OF”* is used**

The expression **‘the number’ has a singular meaning and thus requires a singular verb**, whereas the expression **‘a number’ has a plural meaning and takes a plural verb. EXAMPLE:** **The number of board members is very small.**

**A number of board members were absent.**

**When a positive and negative subject with singular vs plural case**

If your sentence compounds a positive and a negative subject and one is plural, the other singular, the verb should agree with the positive subject.

The department members but not the chair have decided not to teach on Valentine's Day.

It is not the faculty members but the president who decides this issue.

It was the speaker,not his associate, who has provoked the students to riot.

**When a “one of” is used in a sentence**

**In sentences containing the words ‘one of’, the verb is chosen as follows:**

* In simple form, one of or one of the, a singular verb is used.

**One of the** reasons for his demotion **is** his carelessness.  
**One of the pens** **is** missing from my desk.

* The sentences containing phrases ‘one of those who’ or ‘one of the things that’, a plural verb is required.

**He is one of those** managers who **favor** increasing the staff.

Here favor agrees with those. In the phrase one of those who, those is the plural object of the preposition of. In the subordinate clause who favor, the relative pronoun who is the subject and must agree with its antecedent those.

Mr. Verma **is one of our officers** who **are** accompanying me.  
He is **one of our employees** who **are** always alert.

However, when only precedes one of / one of those, a singular verb is used.

Ramesh is **only one of our employees** who **is** always alert.  
Mr Verma is **the only one of our officers** accompanying me.

## **Set 1**

## **Pick the correct sentence/s:**

* 1. The committee is firm on its decision.
  2. The audience were silent.
  3. John is one of the students who has never worked hard.
  4. Peter is the only one of the students who has worked hard.
  5. If I was she, I would accept the offer.
  6. I suggest that he works hard.
  7. Working without any help and guidance require a great deal of determination.
  8. A number of options is discussed by the board of directors.
  9. One of the students who are interested in the project wants to opt out for personal reasons.
  10. A pen is one of the most important item one needs during an examination.

**Set 2**

## **Pick the correct sentence/s:**

* 1. Delhi is one of the cities that is famous worldwide.
  2. The number of students appearing in the exam is increasing every year.
  3. Waking up early and praying to God helps one perform well.
  4. Two thousand rupees is a big amount for such a small task.
  5. If I were the Prime Minister, I would do everything possible to develop my country.
  6. The jury could not come to conclusion because of disagreement among its members.
  7. An extraordinary situation demand an extraordinary solution and courage.
  8. This Christmas, one of my uncle is going to visit us.
  9. The teachers but not the Principal has arrived.
  10. It is hoped that she finish her project before the deadline.