

SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

A singular subject demands a singular verb; a plural subject demands a plural verb. That is the simple principle behind subject-verb agreement.

- Indefinite pronouns such as everyone, nobody, each, every and everybody feel plural to some writers, but they are always singular — and take a singular verb.

Everyone associated with the project is proud to be part of the effort.

Someone has to be responsible.

SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

- **Don't be confused by phrases that come between the subject pronoun and its verb — phrases that may contain plural words.**



Each of the project partners is responsible for writing a chapter summary.

SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

- When the subject of a sentence refers to a quantity of something, it is followed by a singular verb:
- All the bread is mouldy.
- Some money has been stolen.
- No damage has been done.

- When the subject refers to a number of separate items, it should be followed by a plural verb.
- All the apples are mouldy.
- Some books have been stolen.
- No losses have been incurred.

- Plural nouns denoting quantities or amount are usually treated as singular
- Six thousand dollars seems a lot of money to pay for a painting.
- Five days is a long time to wait.
- Three kilos of carrots is far too much.

- The verb that accompanies pronouns such as *all* and *some* will be determined by whether the pronoun is referring to something that is **COUNTABLE** or not.

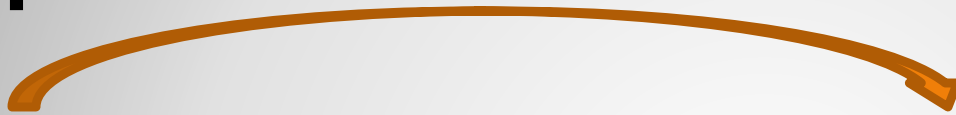
- Some of the students in the cafeteria have voted already.
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- Some of the grain was ruined by the flood.
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- "Students" is countable, but we cannot count "the grain"; it is one lump, one quantity.

SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

- ***None* is usually regarded as singular, but it can be used as a plural pronoun.**



- **None of the representatives has indicated how he or she will vote.**

- **OR**



- **None of the representatives have indicated how they will vote.**

- With fractional expressions (fractions or decimal equivalents), the verb will be determined by what is being measured: is it **COUNTABLE** or not.
- Two-fifths of the grain is ruined.
- One-half of the students were convinced that there would be no final exams this year.
- Of all the returns we have counted so far, fifty percent are in favor of the referendum.
- A majority of the student body is in favor of asking the Dean to stay another year.

Phrases such as *together with*, *along with*, and *as well as* seem to join subjects, but they do not work the same as *and*: they are not conjunctions.

Some of the hay in the barn, as well as some major pieces of farm equipment, was ruined in the flood.

The major spending bill before Congress, together with some other bills that are awaiting action, is going to cost taxpayers plenty.

- In formal writing, when *either* and *neither* appear as a subject alone (without their sidekicks *or* and *nor*), they are singular. This is true even though the subject seems to be two things.
- Neither of these choices appears to be satisfactory.
- The purchasing office will lend me a company car or compensate me for travel expenses. Either is fine with me.

- When *either* and *neither* act as correlative conjunctions, the subject that is closer to the verb determines the number (singular or plural form) of the verb.
- Neither the principal nor the teachers are at fault.
- Either the teachers or the principal has to be responsible for the year-end festival.
- Has either the President or his aides been in touch with you?

- When an expletive construction (*there is, there are, here is, etc.*) begins a sentence, the subject (which determines the number of the verb) comes after the verb.
- There are several explanations for the Civil War.
- We were looking down the street when —all of a sudden — here come Joe and his two brothers.
- If the management team takes this attitude, there is very little latitude for negotiation.

- **Be careful when lengthy or numerous modifying phrases come between the subject and its verb.**
- **Tim Berners-Lee, one of America's most prominent computer scientists and —as a founder of the World Wide Web Consortium — one of the most important figures in the development of the Internet, has been working quietly at M.I.T. for many years.**
- **The fact that the plural “scientists” and “figures” appear in this sentence has no effect on our choice of a singular verb, “has.”**

- **Some of the words in the 'subject of study' list can also be used in the plural when they are not referring to a single subject:**

- Politics is boring. (subject of study)
- Her politics are quite beyond me. (political beliefs)
- Mechanics is one of the subjects I studied at university. (subject of study)
- The mechanics of this process are quite complex. (mechanical operation)

PRONOUN AGREEMENT AND REFERENCE

- A pronoun ***must agree in number with the word or words it replaces.***
- If the word a pronoun refers to is singular, the pronoun must be singular.
- If the word is plural, the pronoun must be plural.

PRONOUN AGREEMENT

- Barbara agreed to lend me her books.
- People walking the trail must watch their step because of snakes.

- **Activity on 263**

Examples

- Indefinite pronouns are always singular.

- *Example: one anyone everyone*
someone nobody
everybody somebody each either
neither

- Each father felt that his child should have won the contest.
- One of the women could not find her purse.
- Everyone must be in his/her seat before the instructor takes the attendance.
- **Activity on 265**

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

- A pronoun must refer clearly to the word it replaces.
- A sentence may be confusing and unclear if a pronoun refers to more than one word.
- Or if the pronoun does not refer to any specific word.
- Example:
- Joe almost dropped out of high school, for he felt **they** emphasized discipline too much.
- **Activity on 266 & 267**

PRONOUN REFERENCE