

## Grammar - Important Rules

1. The indefinite pronouns anyone, everyone, someone, no one, nobody are always singular and, therefore, require singular verbs.

- Everyone **has** done his or her homework.
- Somebody **has left** her purse.

Some indefinite pronouns — such as all, some — are singular or plural depending on what they're referring to. (Is the thing referred to countable or not?) Be careful choosing a verb to accompany such pronouns.

- Some of the students **are** missing from the class.
- Some of the water **is** gone.

Writers generally think of none as meaning not any and will choose a plural verb, as in "None of the engines are working," but when something else makes us regard none as meaning not one, we want a singular verb, as in "None of the food is fresh."

- None of players are attending the show today. (Not Any)
- None of the books in library is worth reading. (Not One)
- None of the students **have done** their homework. (In this last example, the word their precludes the use of the singular verb.

2. Everyone **has** finished his or her homework.

You would always say, "Everybody is here." This means that the word is singular and nothing will change that.

- Each of the students **is** responsible for doing his or her work in the library.

3. **Phrases such as together with**, as well as, and along with are not the same as and. The phrase introduced by as well as or along with will modify the earlier word (mayor in this case), but it does not compound the subjects (as the word 'and' would do).

- The mayor as well as his brothers **is** going to prison.
- The mayor and his brothers **are** going to jail.

4. The pronouns neither and either are singular and require singular verbs even though they seem to be referring, in a sense, to two things.

- Neither of the two traffic lights **is** working.
- Which shirt do you want for Christmas?  
Either **is** fine with me.

In informal writing, neither and either sometimes take a plural verb when these pronouns are followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with of. This is particularly true of interrogative constructions: "Have either of you two clowns read the assignment?" "Are either of you taking this seriously?" Burchfield calls this "a clash between notional and actual agreement."\*

5. Neither ..nor- Either...or is used the subject closer to the verb determines the number of the verb. Whether the subject comes before or after the verb doesn't matter; the proximity determines the number.

- Either my father or my brothers **are** going to sell the house.
- Neither my brothers nor my father **is** going to sell the house.
- **Are** either my brothers or my father responsible?
- **Is** either my father or my brothers responsible?

6. The words there and here are never subjects.

- There **are** two reasons [plural subject] for this.
- There **is** no reason for this.
- Here **are** two apples.

With these constructions (called expletive constructions), the subject follows the verb but still determines the number of the verb.

7. Verbs in the present tense for third-person, singular subjects (he, she, it and anything those words can stand for) have s-endings. Other verbs do not add s-endings.

- He lovess and she lovess and they love  and . . . .

8. Sometimes modifiers will get between a subject and its verb, but these modifiers must not confuse the agreement between the subject and its verb.

- The **mayor**, who has been convicted along with his four brothers on four counts of various crimes but who also seems, like a cat, to have several political lives, **is** finally going to jail.

9. Sometimes nouns take weird forms and can fool us into thinking they're plural when they're really singular and vice-versa. Words such as glasses, pants, pliers, and scissors are regarded as plural (and require plural verbs) unless they're preceded the phrase pair of (in which case the word pair becomes the subject).

- My glasses **were** on the bed.
- My pants **were** torn.
- A pair of plaid trousers **is** in the closet.

10. Some words end in -s and appear to be plural but are really singular and require singular verbs.

- The news from the front **is** bad.
- Measles **is** a dangerous disease for pregnant women.
- Mathematics is a good subject to score marks.

On the other hand, some words ending in -s refer to a single thing but are nonetheless plural and require a plural verb.

- My assets **were** wiped out in the depression.

- The average worker's earnings **have** gone up dramatically.
- Our thanks **go** to the workers who supported the union.

11. The names of sports teams that do not end in "s" will take a plural verb: the Miami Heat have been looking ... , The Connecticut Sun are hoping that new talent will soon join the match

11. Fractional expressions such as half of, a part of, a percentage of, a majority of are sometimes singular and sometimes plural, depending on the meaning. (The same is true, of course, when all, any, more, most and some act as subjects.) Sums and products of mathematical processes are expressed as singular and require singular verbs. The expression "more than one" (oddly enough) takes a singular verb: "More than one student has tried this."

- Some of the voters **are** still angry.
- A large percentage of the older population **is** voting against her.
- Two-fifths of the troops **were** lost in the battle.
- Two-fifths of the vineyard **was** destroyed by fire.
- Forty percent of the students **are** in favor of changing the policy.
- Forty percent of the student body **is** in favor of changing the policy.
- Two and two **is** four.
- Four times four divided by two **is** eight.
- Half of the students **are** from another country.
- Half of the class **is** from another country.
- Some of these facts **are** incorrect.
- Some of this information **is** incorrect.
- 40% of the people **don't** support the new law.
- 40% of the country **doesn't** support the new law.

12. 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 ideas, that **has provoked** the students to riot

13. **POLICE:** Usually, “police” is plural:

“The police **are** investigating the murder.”

“Police **have** arrested three suspects.”

To talk about an individual member of the police, we can say **policeman** or **policewoman** – or the gender-neutral term **police officer**.

14. **BOTH OF / A FEW OF / MANY / SEVERAL**

These words always take the **plural** form of the verb:

“Both of my brothers **are** older than me.”

“A few of these products **have** defects.”

“Many of the houses in this neighbourhood **don’t** have garages.”

“Several of the students **aren’t** going to pass.”

15. **IS “DATA” SINGULAR OR PLURAL?**

There is a debate about the word “data”! *Technically*, data is **plural** (the singular form is “datum”). However, in common usage, people often treat “data” like “information” – as an uncountable noun, which takes the singular form. So both forms are correct

16. If a pronoun is the complement of to be, it should be in the subjective case.

It is him who met me.

It is he who met me.

**17. Pronoun who is used when the verb is in active voice.**

There are many boys whom we know are flirts.

There are many boys who we know are flirts.

**18. Pronoun whom is used when the verb related to it is in passive voice.**

Who are you calling?

Whom are you calling?

**19. If a relative pronoun is used in subjective and objective cases ( who whom) we cannot put one pronoun in place of two.)**

He met a foreigner who he knew and was a famous singer

He met a foreigner whom he knew and who was a famous singer

**20 When a pronoun follows 'than' or as its case is decided by imaging the verb and completing the sentence.**

He is better placed than me.

He is better placed than I am.

**21. 'the same' should not be used in place of a pronoun.**

After reading this book return the same to me.

After reading this book return it to me.

**22. When the following verbs are used reflexively a reflexive pronoun must be put after them.**

acquit, absent, enjoy, apply, avail, resign, over-reach, exert

He enjoyed during the bus journey. Incorrect

He enjoyed himself during the bus journey. Correct

**23. 123 Rule: (First person first, second person next and third person last) :**

While confessing a fault (or expressing a negative idea) the sequence of the personal pronouns should be followed in the above order.

You, he and I are at fault and will be punished ---Incorrect

I, you, and he are at fault and will be punished. --Correct

**231 Rule:** (second person first, Third person next, and first person last)  
While expressing a positive idea or a praise, the sequence of the personal pronouns should be as follows:  
I, you and he, will get an award for the good work we have done. Incorrect  
you, he and I will get an award for the good work we have done. Correct

## 25. Use of 'less' and 'fewer'

'Less' denote quantity and 'fewer' denote number.

No less than fifty persons were killed. Incorrect

No fewer than fifty persons were killed. Correct

There are no fewer than five litres of water in the jug. Incorrect

There are no less than five litres of water in the jug. Correct

## 23. Use of little, a little, the little.

'Little' means 'hardly any'

There is little hope of his recovery. Incorrect

There is a little hope of his recovery correct

'A little' means 'some', though not much.

Little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Incorrect

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Correct

'The little means 'not much but all there is'.

The little milk that is in the pot may be used for the patient. Incorrect

The little milk that is in the pot may be used for the patient. Correct

**26. 'many a' is always followed by the singular verb.**

Many a man were followed by the singular verb. Incorrect

Many a man was drowned in the area. Correct

**27. 'Scarcely' and 'hardly' are followed by 'when' and not by 'than'.**

I had scarcely entered the room than the phone rang. Incorrect

I had scarcely entered the room when the phone rang. Correct

**28. 'Though' is followed by 'yet' and not by 'but'.**

Though he is poor but he is honest. Incorrect

Though he is poor, yet he is honest. Correct

**29. 'No sooner' is followed by 'than'.**

No sooner had I entered the class when the student stood up. Incorrect

No sooner had I entered the class than the students stood up. Correct

**30. 'Lest' must be followed by 'should'.**

Read regularly lest you will fail. Incorrect

Read regularly lest you should fail. Correct

**31. 'such' is followed by 'as'.**

He is such a writer that everybody should read his books. Incorrect

He is such a writer as everybody should read his books. Correct



**32. 'So' is followed by 'that'.**

Sarita was popular with her classmate that she always had

Some people coming to her for advice. Incorrect

Sarita was so popular with her classmate that she always had

Some people coming to her for advice. Correct

**33. When the subordinate clause is introduced by 'than', even if there is past tense in the principal clause, it may be followed by any tense, requires the present tense in the subordinate clause.**

He helped him more than he helped his own children. Incorrect

He helped him more than he helps his own children. Correct

**34. if two actions in a sentence are showing happening in the past, one after the other; the tense of the action happening first should be past perfect and that of the second should be past indefinite.**

The patient died before the doctor arrived. Incorrect

The patient had died before the doctor arrived. Correct

**35. When there is the sense of dislike, hesitation, risk, etc., in a sentence, we should use a gerund instead of a verb. A gerund is that form of the verb which ends in 'ing' and can be used in the place of a noun.**

I dislike to see a film late in the night.

I dislike to seeing a film late in the night.

Young girls hesitate to talk to strangers.

Young girls hesitate talking to strangers.

**36. 'Cent per cent' and 'word by word' are wrong. 'Hundred per cent' and 'word for word' are correct expressions.**

You are never cent per cent sure of your success in a competitive examinations. incorrect

You are never hundred per cent sure of your success in competitive examinations. correct

I can reproduce this lesson word by word. Incorrect

I can reproduce this lesson word for word. Correct

**37. 'Since', 'because', 'as', 'for', - all means 'because', but there is a different in their degree. 'Since' and 'because' are used for stronger cases and 'as' and 'for' for weak cases.**

I respect him as he is my teacher. Incorrect

I respect him because he is my teacher. Correct

**38. Use Present Perfect Progressive for Unfinished Action and Past**

When the action as well as the time is considered unfinished, the verb loads up on third form helping verbs ("to be" and "to have") and changes to the progressive form.

- Western countries have been waging wars in the Middle East for thousands of years.
- I have been drinking tea all day.
- Mary's dog has been barking like crazy since it was born.

### 39. Use Past Perfect for the First of Two Past Actions

When two things happen in the past, we have to mark which one happened first. The one that happened first changes to third form and gets the helping verb, "had."

- By the time I drank one cup of Lapsang Souchong, Mary's dog had barked a million times.
- I had not yet eaten breakfast when Mary walked her dog.
- He could not pay for lunch because he had lost his wallet.

### 40. The words *however*, *therefore*, and *otherwise* cannot join independent clauses without additional punctuation.

An independent clause (1) contains a subject and a verb and (2) expresses a complete thought. It can stand alone as a sentence, or it can be connected with another clause by a comma and a conjunction (such as *and*, *but*, *or*) Ex. **The new advertising campaign is ready, but the CEO has yet to approve it.**

When two independent clauses are joined with a conjunctive adverb like *however*, a semicolon must go in front of the connector and a comma after Ex. **Mr. Bingham can't attend the meeting; *however*, he hopes to call before we adjourn.**

### 41. Relative pronouns (*that*, *which*, and *who*) must appear alongside their antecedents.

A relative pronoun (*that*, *which*, *who*, *whom*, and various forms with the *-ever* suffix) serves one of two purposes. First, it can link a dependent clause to an independent one <Whoever wants to participate is welcome>. The dependent clause (*whoever wants to participate*) serves as the subject of the main clause. Second, it can join a clause with its antecedent <Those who want to participate are welcome>. Here, the dependent clause (*who want to participate*) adds crucial information about its antecedent, *those*.

### 42. Correlative conjunctions (those used in pairs) require parallel phrasing.

- either/or - I want **either** the cheesecake **or** the chocolate cake.

- both/and - We'll have **both** the cheesecake **and** the chocolate cake.
- whether/or - I didn't know **whether** you'd want the cheesecake **or** the chocolate cake, so I got both.
- neither/nor - Oh, you want **neither** the cheesecake **nor** the chocolate cake? No problem.
- not only/but also - I'll eat them both - **not only** the cheesecake **but also** the chocolate cake.
- not/but - I see you're in the mood **not** for desserts **but** appetizers. I'll help you with those, too.

Here are some more useful pairs of correlative conjunctions:

- as/as - Bowling isn't **as** fun **as** skeet shooting.
- such/that - **Such** was the nature of their volatile relationship **that** they never would have made it even if they'd wanted to.
- scarcely/when - I had **scarcely** walked in the door **when** I got an urgent call and had to run right back out again.
- as many/as - There are **as many** curtains **as** there are windows.
- no sooner/than - I'd **no sooner** lie to you **than** strangle a puppy.
- rather/than - She'd **rather** play the drums **than** sing.

**43. the following verbs and phrases should be followed by gerund which is a verbal noun: 'enjoy', 'admit', 'deny', 'appreciate', 'regret', 'avoid', 'consider', 'stop', 'looking forward to', 'accustomed to', 'is used to', 'do not mind', 'object to', etc.**

I am looking forward to receive your replay. Incorrect

I am looking forward to receiving your replay. Correct

He is used to work hard. Incorrect

He is used to working hard. Correct

**44. The word 'to' is frequently used with the infinitive, but is not an essential part of it. For example, after certain verb ('bid' 'let', 'make', 'need', 'dare', 'see', 'hear',) we use the infinitive without 'to'.**

Bid him to go there. Incorrect

Bid him go there. Correct

Make him to stand. Incorrect

Make him stand. Correct

I saw him to cry. Incorrect

I saw him cry. Correct

**45. The infinitive is used without 'to' after 'had better', 'had rather', 'would rather', 'sooner than', and 'rather than',**

You had better to ask permission form him. Incorrect

You had better ask permission from him. Correct

**46. 'Than' should be used after 'no other'.**

I met on other man but Mr. Roy. Incorrect

I met no other than Mr., Roy. Correct

Ram has no other claim except his degrees. Incorrect

Ram has other claim than his degrees. Correct

**47. A verb may take an infinitive or a gerund according to its implication. If the verb indicates a purpose, an infinitive should be used and if the verb indicates a cause, a gerund should be used.**

He went to school for seeing the principal.    Incorrect

He went to school to see the principal.        Correct

He was turned out to copy answers.           Incorrect

He was turned out for copying answers.        Correct

**48. According to me, this is the best hotel in town**

**In my opinion, this is the best hotel in town**

**49. He will get married on 7<sup>th</sup> June' 2019**

**He is getting married on 7<sup>th</sup> June' 2019**

**50. A verb must agree with its subject and not with the complement.**

Our only guide at night were the stars.        Incorrect

Our only guide at night was the stars.        Correct

Read the sentences to decide whether the verbs should be singular or plural. Then click the dropdown menu  to see the answer.

1. The price of these jeans  reasonable.
2. The books borrowed from the library  on my desk.
3. The boy who won the two medals  a friend of mine.
4. Bread and butter  our daily food.
5. The famous singer and composer  arrived.
6. Collecting match-boxes  one of his favourite pastimes.
7. The quality of the candies  poor.
8. Neither his father nor his mother  mahjong.
9. Neither parent  fond of playing mahjong.
10. None of my friends  there.
11. Many a student  made the same mistake.
12. Gold, as well as platinum,  recently risen in price.
13. The boss, as well as his colleagues,  been robbed by the robber.
14. Ten tons  a heavy load.
15. Fifty miles  a long distance.
16. Thirty years  a long time.
17. One of the books  been missing.
18. The poor  suffering.
19. You should decide which one of the three choices A, B, or C  the best question.
20. One of the most intelligent students who  full marks  John.
21. The only one of these most intelligent students who  under 18  Peter.
22. One of these most intelligent students whose example  being followed  John.

23. The police officers quickly ate the box of donuts, that was in the squad room.

24. Thoroughly inspecting its hoses and wires, the engine was deemed to be fully functional.

25. Dangled over the mountain, the climber's hands nearly slipped.

**Directions: Write the correct verb in the blank to the left of each sentence.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Everybody (was-were) asked to be quiet.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ In a marathon, few of the starters (finishes-finish) the race.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Sixty days (is-are) not enough time to complete the project.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ All of the workers (is-are) receiving their bonus.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ On our street (is-are) many tall trees.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ It (don't-doesn't) make any difference.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The value of cars and motorcycles (has-have) increased.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ The principal and her husband (is-are) honored guests.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Either the pitcher or the base runners (was-were) caught napping.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ One of my friends (believe-believes) in E.S.P.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Have you ever heard the expression, "No new (is-are) good news?"



12. \_\_\_\_\_ There (was-were) several dents in the car.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Louise (doesn't-don't) want to drive that long distance.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Either Luis or Horace (pay-pays) the bills in our house.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ A boy and a girl (were-was) here to see you.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ The box of apples (is-are) on the porch.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Some of the job applicants (is-are) expected to pass the difficult screening test.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ The army (is-are) conducting maneuvers in March.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ Here (come-comes) the family now.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ Neither of us (is-are) going to work.
21. \_\_\_\_\_ (Doesn't-Don't) they know when to quit?
22. \_\_\_\_\_ Thirty minutes (is-are) the time limit for the test.
23. \_\_\_\_\_ Measles (is-are) a disease most children experience.
24. \_\_\_\_\_ The class (is-are) turning in their registration forms today.
25. \_\_\_\_\_ Beyond the mountains (is-are) a fertile valley.

**The most common encountered prepositional choice idioms on the test:**

**In danger of: in the danger to, as a danger for, of danger to**

**Center on: center around or upon**

**Consider: consider to be, consider as**

**Credit with: credit as, credit to be**

**Different from; different than**

**Estimated to be: estimated at, estimated as**

**Forbid x to y: forbid from**

**Modeled after; modelled upon**

**Regarded as: regarded, regarded to be**