

# 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.
- 

- Some of the grain was ruined by the flood.
- 

- "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)

- **'The news about the king's death** *has* been reported around the world.' (It)
- **English has countable and uncountable nouns.** When you want to show a plural countable noun, use an 's' e.g. a hat / 3 hats.

**Nouns with no plural**



- **Uncountable nouns have no plural and always use a singular verb.** But, 'news' is a noun that is **uncountable AND ends in an 's'**.
- More examples: school subjects, such as mathematics, gymnastics and physics; Games, such as dominos and darts and the disease: measles.

**Nouns with no plural**

- 'The **police** *are* coming! The **police** *are* coming!' (They)
- Some nouns in English are **collective**. They represent a **group or number of objects together**. In many cases, these nouns are considered plural: they are collections of single pieces kept together. Because of this, **they take a plural verb and have no singular noun form**.

**Nouns with no singular**

- More examples: staff, congratulations, cattle, thanks and fishes (an alternative plural which means the different species of fish which are in the same place).
- **This also applies with 'pair nouns'** - nouns where two things are joined together. Examples of these are: glasses, scissors, tweezers, trousers, headphones and tights.
- **'My jeans** *don't* fit anymore!' (They)

**Nouns with no singular**

# **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 131-133 (theory section)**

**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 134**

# 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 134-137 (theory section)**

## PRONOUN REFERENCE