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Subject–Verb Agreement



I runs. She run. You runs.

Do the given options sound correct? Or does something feel out of place?

If you look at the sentences carefully, you will find what is wrong. If you have not found what is wrong yet, worry not, because in this chapter, we will study exactly why these sentences are grammatically incorrect and how to make them correct. The correct subject, with the right verb makes it easier to comprehend the sentence improving the flow of the sentence. The numerical representation a verb holds in a sentence is of great importance to apprehend the person/ group of people we are talking about.

In the given sentences, I is the subject. **Run/ runs** is the verb. It must always be made sure that the subjects and verbs, in a sentence, agree with each other. What does agreeing exactly mean here? Agreeing refers to concord between the number of the subjects and the verb. A verb changes according to what time it needs to specify. It also changes its form according to the number of subjects being referred to in the sentence.

This is exactly what the subject–verb agreement means. The subjects and verbs must always agree in number.

Read the following out loud:

	SINGULAR SUBJECTS	PLURAL SUBJECTS
First Person	I walk.	We walk.
Second Person	You walk.	You all walk.
Third Person	He walks. She walks.	They walk.

Do the given sentences sound correct? You may have noticed that the sentences in the third person singular have ‘s’ added to the verbs. Think about the following verbs: **run, walk, eat, study, work, cry**. In the first person singular, all of them may be written like this: **I run, I walk, I eat, I study, I work, I cry**. It is similar for the second person singular: **you run, you walk, you eat, you study, you work, you cry**.

The situation changes when we talk about third-person singulars, like **he, she, or the dog**. Here, an ‘s’ must be added to each verb. It can be written like this: **he runs, he walks, he eats, he studies, he works, he cries**. Or **she runs, she walks, she eats, she studies, she works, she cries**. Or **the dog runs, the dog walks, the dog eats, the dog studies, the dog works, the dog cries**.

Hotkeys

If you cannot decide whether a sentence is grammatically right or wrong, try reading it out loud! It is a tried and tested tip that many writers and speakers use.

Reading out can help you detect mistakes better!

The importance of a correct subject–verb agreement rests in the fact that the absence of one may lead to a serious grammatical error. These are called subject–verb agreement Errors and they point at a serious absence of grammatical knowledge. **Therefore, we must make sure that we abide by the following rules to ensure an error-free sentence.**



Rules for subject-verb agreement

1. A singular subject, like Jamie, park, bus, has a singular verb and a plural subject has a plural verb.

Following is an example:

- **Jamie walks to the park.**
- **Jamie and his friends walk to the park.**

2. In sentences having 'of', the subject is the one that comes 'of'. Identification of the subject is important to prevent mistakes. Following is an example:

- **The swarm of bees lives in the tree.**
- **The school of dolphins swims in the sea.**

3. Two subjects joined by or, either/or, or neither/nor will have a singular verb.

Following is an example:

- **Either my mom or my dad is accompanying me to the fair.**
- **Neither of my friends has the same opinion.**

4. Some sentences begin with 'here' or 'there'. In such sentences, the subject would follow the verb.

Following is an example:

- **Here are the clothes.**
- **There is the shoe.**

5. Two or more subjects, when joined together, are considered plural and therefore require a verb without an 's'.

Following is an example:

- **Ram, Shyam, and Emily run to the park.**
- **Kanika and her friends run to the park.**

6. If a subject is preceded by words like 'every' and 'each', then that subject is considered singular and therefore the verb must end with an 's'.

Following is an example:

- **Each woman and man leaves the room.**

7. Infinite pronouns (like everyone, everything, neither, somebody, anything, either, anybody, anyone, each, etc.) are usually

considered singular and thus the verb ends with an 's'.

Following is an example:

- **Everyone runs to the park.**
- **Somebody leaves the room.**

8. In plural subjects joined by 'or', 'but' or 'nor', the verb has to agree with the subject closest to it.

Following is an example:

- **Either Ram or Shyam leaves the room.**
- **Neither Ram nor his brothers run to the park.**

9. There are some indefinite pronouns (like some, most, none, part, etc.) in which the verb may be singular or plural depending on the object.

Following is an example:

- **All of the carpenters are gone.**
- **All of the cake is gone.**

10. A collective noun is considered a singular subject: therefore, the verb will end with an 's'.

Following is an example:

- **The committee is considering his expulsion.**
- **The class is unusually quiet today.**

11. If a subject is a measurement of time, money, distance, weight, etc., then it is considered singular and therefore the verb will end in an 's'.

Following is an example:

- **Ten thousand euros is too much to spend in just a day.**
- **Seventeen kilos of wheat is enough for us.**

12. It is important for the verb to agree only with the subject and not with any other part of the sentence.

Following is an example:

- **The problem we face in this meeting is all of the participants have brought**

their children with themselves and we don't have enough space.

What is the subject in this sentence? Is it the problem, this meeting or the participants? Identification of the subject is important. In this sentence, 'the problem' is the subject. It is singular. So, the verb will also be singular.

Following are more examples:

There are many queries.

There is a query.

What is the subject in the given sentences? It is 'queries' in the first sentence and 'query' in the second sentence.

The news was devastating.

Civics is her favourite subject.

The sentences given above have subjects with nouns that end with an 's'. But that does not necessarily indicate its plurality. 'The news' and 'civics' indicate a singular subject: therefore, the verb would be plural.

Study the following table and compare the correct and incorrect sentences.

INCORRECT	CORRECT
Half of the task are finished.	Half of the task is finished.
All of the data are uploaded.	All of the data is uploaded.
Much of the cake are eaten.	Much of the cake is eaten.
Ten euros are a lot of money here.	Ten euros is a lot of money here.
The number of people in this room do not matter.	The number of people in this room does not matter.
One of the mobile phones are stolen.	One of the mobile phones is stolen.
The lady, along with her friends, exit the room hastily.	The lady, along with her friends, exits the room hastily.
Jill and her friends walks to the park.	Jill and her friends walk to the park.
Neither Jill nor her friends stays at home.	Neither Jill nor her friends stay at home.
Everyone walk to the store.	Everyone walks to the store.
Most of the students is gone.	Most of the students are gone.
Some of the people stays inside.	Some of the people stay inside.
The group dance with perfection.	The group dances with perfection.
Physics are the most difficult subject.	Physics is the most difficult subject.



INCORRECT	CORRECT
Seventeen metres are a lot of distance.	Seventeen metres is a lot of distance.
The aim of the meeting, among other things, are to achieve a proper and equitable distribution of resources among the members of the committee.	The aim of the meeting, among other things, is to achieve a proper and equitable distribution of resources among the members of the committee.
Reading with my friends are my favourite pastime activity.	Reading with my friends is my favourite pastime activity.

Hotkeys

While reading the text out loud may help, it is not always possible in examination environments. In such a case, try subvocalising (uttering

words to yourself, in your mouth, with little or no audible noise) the text! Subvocalising can help you detect mistakes!

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Select the correct option and fill in the blanks.

1. Some of the bundles _____ misplaced. (is/are)
2. The main criterion I will judge this meeting on _____ the reactions and responses it will attract from the mainstream media houses. (is/are)
3. I told him yesterday that seventy pounds of chocolate _____ more than enough for this batch of cakes. (was/were)
4. Most of the problems _____ solved now that Jill has arrived. (are/is)
5. His family _____ eager to let me in, even though I did not make quite the impression the last time. (was/were)
6. I don't want to see _____ trousers lying around anymore. Make sure you fold them and keep them neatly in your backpack. (these/this)
7. This phenomenon rarely _____ nowadays, climate change has had adverse effects on this. (occur/occurs)
8. Ananda, along with her friends, _____ made a nerve-wracking short horror film. (has/have)
9. I saw a bizarre-looking peahen walking towards me in the park the other morning. Its steps _____ like that of a crooked man. (was/were)
10. If the supervisor _____ me doing this, she will most certainly dismiss me from my job. (notice/notices)
11. Those dogs _____ at all the strangers. (bark/barks)
12. There _____ no news available regarding this incident. (is/are)
13. The issue with the assignments _____ that I can't understand their meanings. (is/are)
14. What _____ she trying to tell me? (is/are)
15. If the team _____ the authorities, we will have no other option but to withdraw our support. (sue/sues)
16. They will _____ me soon whether I am accepted or not. (inform/informs)
17. She is not in the mood to _____ your complaints. (entertain/entertains)
18. Radha shall _____ this presentation along with her dear friends. (deliver/delivers)
19. A few of the people _____ out of the race already. (is/are)
20. Half of the cake _____ eaten by the students. (was/were)
21. _____ I even allowed to enter the studio? (Was/Were)

22. A million dollars _____ a huge amount of money to spend in a year. (is/are)
23. I can see that he _____ at the end of this. (fail/fails)
24. The viceroy _____ the room in a hurry. (leave/leaves)
25. The committee _____ amongst themselves regarding this issue. (argues/argue)
26. Raymond, along with his friends, _____ the dark tunnel. (enter/enters)
27. Jeanie and her friends _____ leaving for Mexico tomorrow. (is/are)
28. How will they _____ the project while the company struggles with its finances? (complete/completes)
29. _____ you invited to the party? (Is/Are)
30. With whom _____ you planning to conduct research on this? (Is/Are)

SOLUTIONS

1. **Are**—The subject, some is plural.
2. **Is**—The subject, criterion is singular.
3. **Was**—The subject, seventy pounds of chocolate, is taken as a single unit of measurement, and therefore, it is considered singular.
4. **Are**—The subject, most of the problems is plural.
5. **Was**—The subject, family, is singular.
6. **These**—The subject, trousers, even though referring to a singular subject, is considered plural.
7. **Occurs**—The subject, this phenomenon is singular. Therefore, the verb will have an 's' attached to it.
8. **Has**—Ananda is the subject of this sentence, not she along with her friends. Therefore, the subject is singular.
9. **Were**—The subject, its steps, is plural.
10. **Notices**—The subject, the supervisor, is singular. Therefore, the verb will have an 's' attached to it.
11. **Bark**—The subject, dog, is singular.
12. **Is**—News is considered a singular subject.
13. **Is**—The subject, the issue, is singular.
14. **Is**—The subject, she, is singular.
15. **Sues**—The subject, the team, is considered a singular subject.
16. **Inform**—The subject, they, will have a singular verb according to the rules.
17. **Entertain**—The subject, she, will have a singular verb when attached with 'to'.
18. **Deliver**—The future tense will have a singular verb even if the subject, Radha, is singular.
19. **Are**—The subject, a few of the people, are plural.
20. **Was**—Half of the cake is considered a singular subject.
21. **Was**—The subject, I, will have a singular verb.
22. **Is**—The subject, a million dollars, is a unit of measurement. Therefore, it is a singular subject.
23. **Fails**—The subject, he, is singular.
24. **Leaves**—The subject, the viceroy, is singular.
25. **Argues**—The subject, the committee, is not acting as a singular unit. It is arguing among themselves as individuals. Therefore, the subject is plural.
26. **Enters**—The subject, Raymond, is singular.
27. **Are**—The subject, Jeanie and her friends, are plural.
28. **Complete**—The subject, they, is plural.
29. **Are**—The subject, you, even though singular, will have a plural verb because it is second person.
30. **Are**—Similar explanations as above

