

## Subject Verb Agreement

In academic and professional writing, grammar and sentence construction are of paramount importance. Even though grammar is also important in professional writing, poor grammar can undermine the credibility of a professional. The relationship between subjects and verbs lies at the heart of grammatically correct English writing. It is important to ensure that subjects and verbs always agree with each other. Subject-verb agreement unifies a sentence and makes it easier to understand. Correct sentences are easy to understand and demonstrate good writing skills.

### **Rules of Subject-verb agreement:**

*Golden rule:* If the subject is singular, verb is singular. If the subject is plural, then verb is plural.

**Example:** She writes every day.

They write every day.

1. When the subject of the sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by *and*, use a plural verb.

**Example:** The doctoral student and the committee members write every day.

The percentage of employees who called in sick and the number of employees who left their jobs within 2 years are reflective of the level of job satisfaction.

Exception: When the subject of the sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by *and*, but convey a single idea, use a singular verb.

**Example:** To take pay and then not to do work is dishonest.

2. When a compound subject contains both a singular and a plural noun or pronoun joined by "or" or "nor," the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is closest to the verb. This is also called the rule of proximity.

**Example:** The student *or* the committee members discuss every day.

The committee members *or* the student discusses every day.

3. When two or more singular nouns or pronouns are connected by "or" or "nor," use a singular verb.

**Example:** The chairperson *or* the CEO approves the proposal before proceeding.

4. When there is one subject and more than one verb, the verbs throughout the sentence must agree with the subject.

**Example:** Interviews are one way to collect data and allow researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of participants.

An assumption is something that is generally accepted as true and is an important consideration when conducting a doctoral study.

5. When a phrase comes between the subject and the verb, remember that the verb still agrees with the subject, not the noun or pronoun in the phrase following the subject of the sentence.

**Example:** **The student**, as well as the committee members, is excited.  
**The student** with all the master's degrees is very motivated.  
**Strategies** that the teacher uses to encourage classroom participation include using small groups and clarifying expectations.

6. The words and phrases "each," "each one," "either," "neither," "everyone," "everybody," "anyone," "anybody," "nobody," "somebody," "someone," and "no one" are singular and require a singular verb.

**Example:** **Each** of the participants was willing to be recorded.  
**Neither** alternative hypothesis was accepted.  
I will offer a \$5 gift card to **everybody** who participates in the study.  
**No one** was available to meet with me at the preferred times.

7. Noncountable nouns take a singular verb.

**Example:** **Education** is the key to success.  
**Diabetes** affects many people around the world.  
**The information** obtained from the business owners was relevant to include in the study.  
**The research** I found on the topic was limited.

8. Some countable nouns in English such as *earnings*, *goods*, *odds*, *surroundings*, *proceeds*, *contents*, and *valuables* only have a plural form and take a plural verb.

**Example:** **The earnings** for this quarter exceed expectations.  
**The proceeds** from the sale go to support the homeless population in the city.  
**Locally produced goods** have the advantage of shorter supply chains.

9. In sentences beginning with "there is" or "there are," the subject follows the verb. Since "there" is not the subject, the verb agrees with what follows the verb.

**Example:** There is little **administrative support**.  
There are many **factors** affecting teacher retention.

10. Collective nouns are words that imply more than one person but are considered singular and take a singular verb. Some examples are "group," "team," "committee," "family," and "class."

**Example:** **The group** meets every week.  
**The committee** agrees on the quality of the writing.

However, the plural verb is used if the focus is on the individuals in the group. This is much less common.

**Example:** **The committee** participate in various volunteer activities in their private lives.

11. Titles of books, movies, novels, etc. are treated as singular.

**Example:** **Pride and Prejudice** was my favorite book. I want to see the movie.

12. Two infinitives separated by and take a plural verb.

**Example:** **To run and to read** are my two favorite “Free-time” activities.

13. Both, few, many, others, and several take a plural verb.

**Example:** **Several** need to finish the race.

**A few** have right answer.

14. When the subject is all, any, more, most, none, or some, this is the only time you must look at the object of the prepositional phrase to determine whether it is singular or plural.

**Example:** **All** of the chickens have laid eggs.

**Some** of the milk has spilled.

15. Quantity, time and money is always considered singular, therefore use single verb.

**Example:** **Fifty years** is a long time.

**One quintal** of wheat is too much to transport.

**Three hours** is a long time to watch a Bollywood movie.

Some examples:

1. Second hand furniture are/is sold here at reasonable price.
2. This singer, along with a few others, plays/play the harmonica on stage.
3. Every one of the shirts have/has a green collar.
4. A majority of workers **have/has** access to some paid sick days.