**Subject-Verb Agreement**

***Module 1:***

For a sentence to be correct and accurate, the Verb must agree with its Subject in Number and Person. That is to say that a Verb and Subject must be in correlation in a certain sentence. It must be kept in mind that every form of verb does not agree with all kinds of subjects. Therefore, it is important to learn the rules of Subject-Verb Agreement in order to compose and write accurate sentences in English.

**Rule 1:** The Verb depends on the headword of the subject. If the headword is singular, then the verb will be singular and if the headword is plural, then the verb will be plural.

Example: The quality of the mangoes (be) good. (is)

The choice of words (be) excellent. (is)

Many students (be) there. (are)

**Rule 2:** Nouns/pronouns that are joined by the word ‘and’ are regarded as plural subject together. Thus, the verb that follows is also plural.

Example: He and I (be) friends. (are)

Rakib and Razib (be) playing. (are)

Exception: Bread and butter (be) my favorite food. (is)

[Here, bread and butter is regarded as a single meal together and because that is singular, the verb form is also singular.]

**Rule 3:** If two nouns/pronouns joined with the word ‘and’, refer to two different people and if the word ‘the’ precedes both of them, then the following verb shall be plural. But if they refer to the same person then word ‘the’ precedes only one of them and it must be understood that the following verb must be singular.

Example: The headmaster and the secretary of our school (be) present. (were)

The MP and Minister (have) joined the session. (has)

**Rule 4:** If ‘each/every/any/no/more than one/none/no one’ are the subject or part of the subject then the verb following them are always singular. Also if ‘each of the/one of the/either of the/neither of the/none of the’ are part of the subject then the following verb will always be singular.

Example: Each boy and each girl (have) got a prize. (has)

Neither of the girls (be) beautiful. (was)

**Rule 5:** For nouns and pronouns joined by ‘as well as/with/along with/together with/accompanied by/followed by’ the verb follows the form of the first noun/pronoun. If it is singular, then the verb is also singular and if the first noun/pronoun is plural then the verb is also plural.

Example: The chairperson, along with the members, (be) present. (was)

Nipu, as well as her brothers, (be) good. (is)

**Rule 6:** For nouns and pronouns joined by ‘not only………but also/or/nor’, the verb form always follows the last noun/pronoun.

Example: Not only Professor Hafiz but also his sons (be) honest. (are)

Neither she nor her sisters (have) done it. (have)

**Rule 7:** In case of distance, time, weight, age, money etc. no matter the amount, the following verb will always be singular.

Example: Fifty miles (be) a long distance. (is)

Tk. 50,000 (be) spent that day. (was)

**Rule 8:** If infinitives, gerunds, verbal nouns and clauses are the subject of a sentence, then that subject should be treated as 3rd person singular number and the following verb should be according to that.

Example: To tell lies (be) a great sin. (is)

The reading of novels (be) interesting. (is)

**Rule 9:** Collective Noun is always followed by a singular verb. But if the collective nouns are somehow separated then they are followed by a plural verb.

Example: The jury (be) giving its verdict today. (is)

The jury (be) divided into two groups. (were)

**Rule 10:** An adjective followed by ‘the’ actually indicates a plural noun. Therefore the following verb shall also be plural.

Example: The virtuous (Good/Honest) (be) always happy. (are)

**Rule 11:**Information, news, scenery, machinery, advice, furniture, wages, poetry, issue, brick, hair, alphabet, luggage, politics, physics, economics, mathematics, ethics, civics, statistics, the United States of America, the United Arab Emirates etc.– these words are always used as singular, therefore the following verbs will also be singular.

Example: The *scenery* of Cox’s bazaar (be) charming. (is)

The *wages* of sin (be) death. (is)

**Rule 12:**The verb after a relative pronoun generally follows the form of the antecedent (the preceding noun/pronoun).

Example: It is I who (be) responsible. (am)

It was you who (be) to blame. (were)

**Rule 13:** Always use plural verbs after the word ‘all’. But in some cases like phrases, the singular verb is also used after the word ‘all’.

Example: They all (be) students. (are)

All that (glitter) is not gold. (glitters)

**Rule 14:** Always use the singular form of a verb after Uncountable nouns (the nouns we cannot count) and Abstract nouns (the nouns that narrate the situation, merit, demerit, quality of something).

Example: Cricket (be) my favorite game. (is)

Truthfulness (be) a great virtue. (is)

**Rule 15:** Both the noun and verb should be singular after ‘many a/an’ because it relates to singularity. But both the noun and verb should be plural after ‘many’.

Example: Many a rich man (live) here. (lives)

Many poor men (live) in this town. (live)

**Rule 16:** Titles and names take a singular verb when they refer to one thing.

Example: ‘Star Wars’ (be) a very successful film. (is/was)

The Rose and Crown (be) that old pub by the river. (is)

**Rule 17:** After ‘there’ the verb agrees with its compliment.

Example: There was a beautiful house.

There were some beautiful houses.

**Exercise**

1. The quality of the mangoes ……………….. (be) not good.

2. Gold and Silver ……………….. (be) precious metals.

3. Time and tide …………………. (wait) For no man.

4. The house, with its contents, ……………………. (be) insured.

5. Our happiness or our sorrow …………………. (be) largely due to our own action.

6. Neither the chairman nor the directors …………………… (be) present.

7. Either he or I ……………… (be) mistaken.

8. My friend ……………………. (be) not to be blamed, nor ………………… (be) I.

9. Neither of the two men …………………… (be) very strong.

10. Each of these substances ……………………. (be) found in Bangladesh.

11. Many a man …………………. (do) not know his own good deeds.

12. Every boy and every girl ………………………. (be) given a packet of sweets.

13. Mathematics …………………. (be) a branch of study in every school.

14. Twelve dozen of these things …………………. (cost) around 15,000 BDT.

15. The committee …………………….. (have ) issued its report.

16. The *Arabian Nights* ……………………. (be) still a great favorite.

17. The jury ………………………. (be) divided in their opinions.

18. The accountant and the cashier ……………………… (have) absconded.

19. The cow as well as the horse ………………….. (eat) grass.

20. Neither his father nor his mother …………………….. (be) alive.

**Answers**

1. Was/is
2. Are/were
3. Waits
4. Was/is
5. Is/was
6. Are/were
7. Am
8. Is/was, Am/was
9. Was/is
10. Is/was
11. Does
12. Was/is
13. Is
14. Cost
15. Has
16. Is
17. were/are
18. have
19. eats
20. is/was