

# Expressions To Describe Problems

English for Start-up Incubator  
[cakap.com](https://cakap.com)





# Learning Objectives

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**After this lesson, students will be able to:**

- apply the learned expressions in writing under the correct context.
- demonstrate understanding of basic Subject Verb Agreement in writing correctly.

# Warm Up

## Guess The Word

Observe the following pictures and guess what the word in question is



+



+



+



+



k => g

tor

Can you guess what  
the words are?





# Warm Up

## Guess The Word

Observe the following pictures and guess what the word in question is

miss

ing

doc

u

ments



+



+



+



+



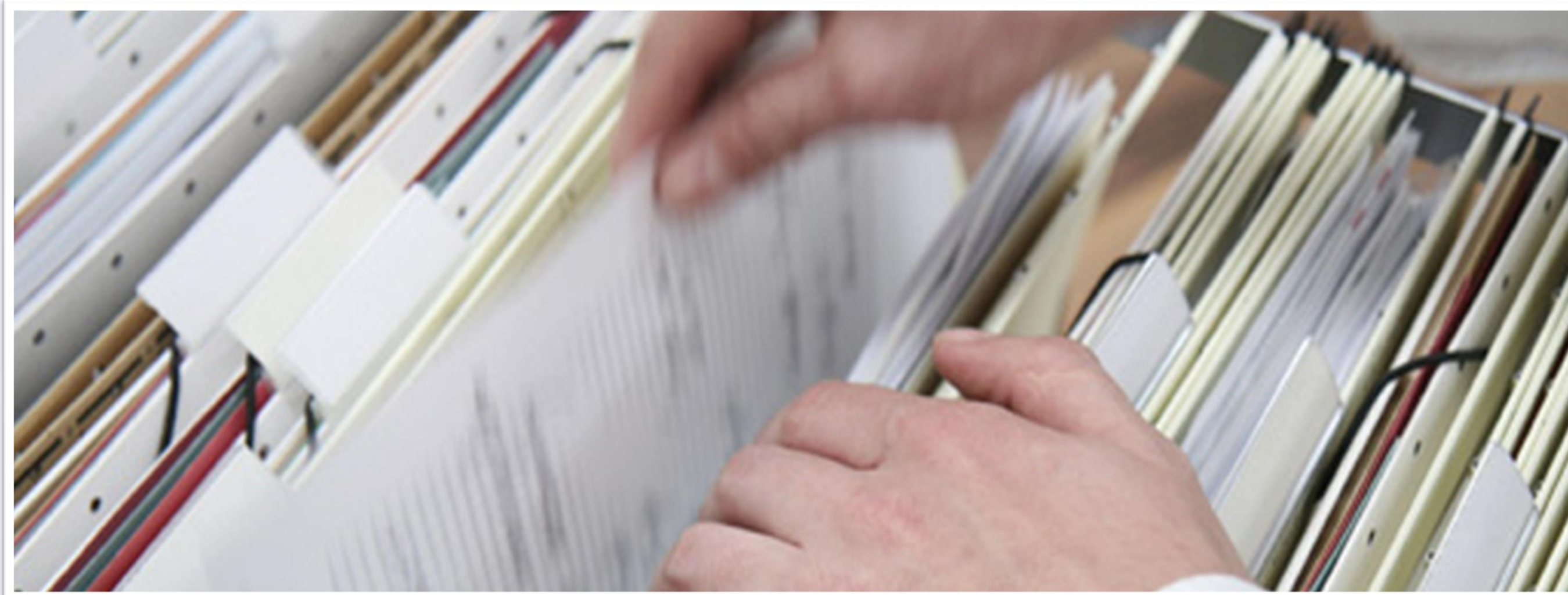
k => g

tor



# Discussion Points

## missing documents



- Have you ever experienced such problems at work? If yes, could you detail the whole story?
- Are physical documents still relevant in this day and age?
- Is it possible to lose online documents?

# Vocabulary Build Up

## Typical Problems of Starting a Start-up Business

Study the following lists and talk about your understanding on each problem with your teacher or the other participants!

- Lack of money/capital
- Unclear target market
- Lack of plan
- Ineffective management

- Limited local talent pool
- Low team commitment and lack of motivation
- No understanding of the roles and responsibilities within the company

**Let's discuss:**

What do you know of the problems on the left?



Retrieved from: <https://www.teamwork.com/blog/11-challenges-startups-face/> and <https://easternpeak.com/blog/the-10-biggest-challenges-startup-founders-face-when-building-a-tech-startup-team/>



# Useful Expressions

## Asking about problems

Study and practice the following expressions.

Insert and employ the problems mentioned on the previous slide where necessary

### With “Be”

- Is there a problem?
- Are there problems?
- Is something wrong?
- Is [insert the issue] a problem?
- Are [insert the issues] the problem here?

### With Question Word

- What’s wrong?
- What’s the matter?
- What seems to be the problem?
- Why do you have trouble with [insert the issue]?
- Are [insert the issues] the problem here?
- What/Who do you have trouble with?
- When do you start experiencing the trouble?
- How did the problem happen?

### With modal verbs

- Will/Would there be a problem(s) with [insert the object of the talk]?
- Should we be worried/cautious about [insert the issue]?
- Can/Could you tell me what the problem is?



# Writing Sample I

Study the use of “Asking About Problems” expressions on the previous slide

Issues Inquiry

andrew@squline.com

Issues Inquiry

Dear Andrew,

I was briefly informed by Harold in the Tech team that there might be a slight delay with our currently being developed product. Seeing that the product has been set to launch next month, could you kindly explain to me what the problem is? Is there something wrong with the product features?

Since we are nearing the product launch date, could you please fill me in on what the issues are/what do we have trouble with?









Kindly fill me in on what the blockers are so that we can address and solve them as soon as possible.



Thanks so much.


Regards,

**Samantha Anderson**  
Head of Business Development  
Squline.com

Send







Identify all “Asking About Problems” expressions!  
How many of them are used?  
Explain what the problem is!



# Writing Exercise I

## Ask the problem

Observe the email on the previous slide and practise asking about problems on a formal email.  
Pay attention to the provided prompts and the following email template.



- Sender: Luke (works at Cakap – product team)
- Receiver: Maidie (works at Cakap – tech team)
- Email content: inquire why the phase 2 of the live chat feature development on the timeline isn't progressing



# Useful Expressions

## Describing problems in general

Study and practice the following expressions. Insert and employ the problems mentioned on slide six where necessary.

### Stating the problems

- I have problems with [our backlog sheet]
- There are some problems with [our suppliers]
- There seems to be a problem(s) with [insert the issue here]
- There's a bit of a hiccup/a slight issue with the...
- Please allow me to explain what the issues/blockers are...
- There are a few things that could potentially slow down/that are slowing down our [progress], namely/one of them being...
- We've got issues with [insert the problem]
- Unfortunately, we're having some trouble with [insert the issue]
- The problem with our [insert the object of the talk] is that it...





# Useful Expressions

## Describing problems with specific details

Study and practice the following expressions.

### Problems related to location

- I'm afraid the room is too small. It **won't accommodate** all of our guests.
- Apparently, **there's no heat**. They need to fix it before we can use the room.

### Problems related to money

- It appears that your account is **overdue**. Please call me as soon as possible to arrange payment.
- Apparently, there was **a mistake on the invoice**. We'll send another immediately.

### Problems related to delivery

- We placed our order two weeks ago, but **we haven't received it yet**.
- The order was supposed to include 150 folders, **but we only received 100**.

### Problems related to equipment

- The microphone **isn't working properly**.
- The laptop **keeps shutting down**.





# Stating Problem Exercise

## Stating problems

Study the following pointers and determine how you would state the problems in a formal writing format

The main problem	Problem description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty in finding qualified candidates</li> </ul>	<p>Example:</p> <p>Our current problem is due to the lack of qualified candidates in our talent pool</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Double booked room</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An undercharged order</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The delivered booth is in the wrong size</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defective projector</li> </ul>	





# Writing Exercise II

## State the problem

Reply to the sent email on slide nine.

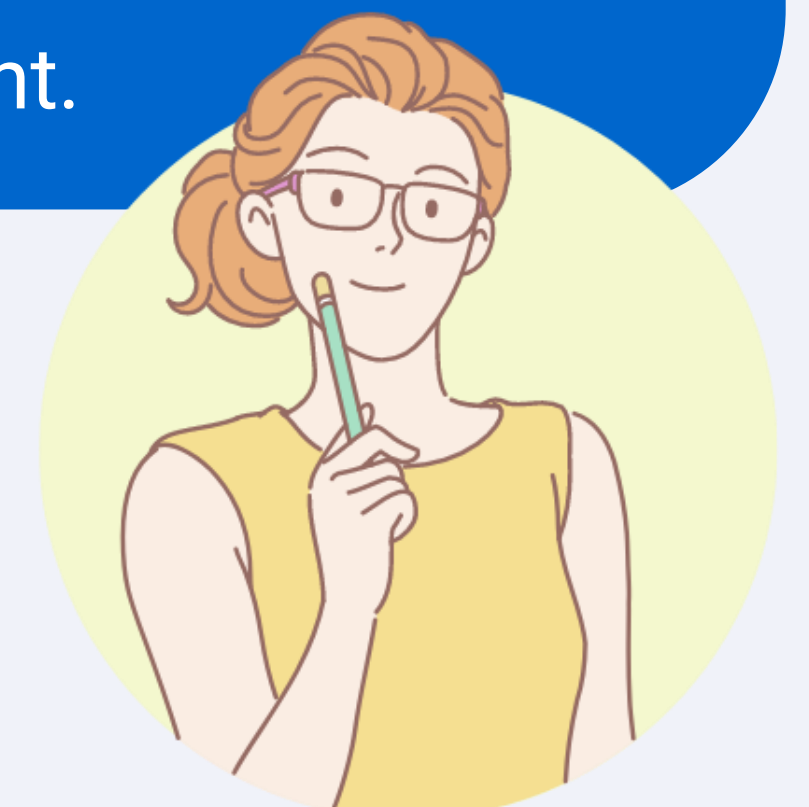
Pay attention to the provided prompts and the following email template.



The screenshot shows a 'New Message' window with a dark header bar. Below the header, there are fields for 'To |' and 'Cc Bcc' on the right. Below these is a 'Subject' field. The main body of the email is a large white area. At the bottom, there is a rich text editor toolbar with various icons for undo, redo, font face (Sans Serif), font size (11), bold (B), italic (I), underline (U), text color (A), background color, bulleted list, numbered list, decrease indent, increase indent, quote, link, and unlink. Below the toolbar is a 'Send' button and a row of icons for text color, attachments, links, emojis, images, attachments, and a pencil icon. On the far right of the bottom bar are three vertical dots and a trash icon.

### Email content:

- Due to unexpected issues, the PIC in charge of the phase 2 progress abruptly quit, leaving the post empty. Coordinate with HR personnel to find the replacement.



# Writing Sample II

## Describing problems on business report

Study the structure of the following business report and the problem description in it

### Introduction

The human resources manager requested this report to examine the high turnover rate of employees at GHS Corporation. The information in this report was gathered by members of the human resources department over three months...

### Findings

The most significant issue found by the HR team when interviewing staff was the lack of support to new mothers who require childcare services to be able to come to work. Employees mentioned their frustration at not having an in-house childcare system that could help them continue working. Another issue mentioned by the staff was the lack of communication between employees and upper management. They expressed their concerns about receiving inconsistent and late instructions. They shared how they didn't know the main business objectives which led them to lose interest in the company and their jobs.

### Conclusions

The main issues that we found were as follows:

1. Lack of support to new mothers in regards to childcare
2. Lack of communication between the staff and upper management

### Recommendations

To address these two main issues, we recommend the following steps be taken:

1. An in-house childcare center can be established at minimal cost to GHS, encouraging mothers to return to work.
2. Each department should choose an employee ambassador to represent the interests of staff in management meetings. This ambassador can express concerns and relay outcomes to their teams to increase engagement.



Identify the problem  
addressed and described  
on the business report

Adapted from: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/formal-business-report-example>



# Writing Exercise III

## Describing problems on business report

Develop a brief business report of your own based on the provided template, structure and prompt

- **Introduction**

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- **Findings**

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- **Conclusions**

The main issues that we found were as follows:

1. 

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- **Recommendations**

To address these two main issues, we recommend the following steps be taken:

1. 

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Select and develop a problem of your own choosing into a **brief** business report. You may use the problems covered on slide 6 and 12 as insights.

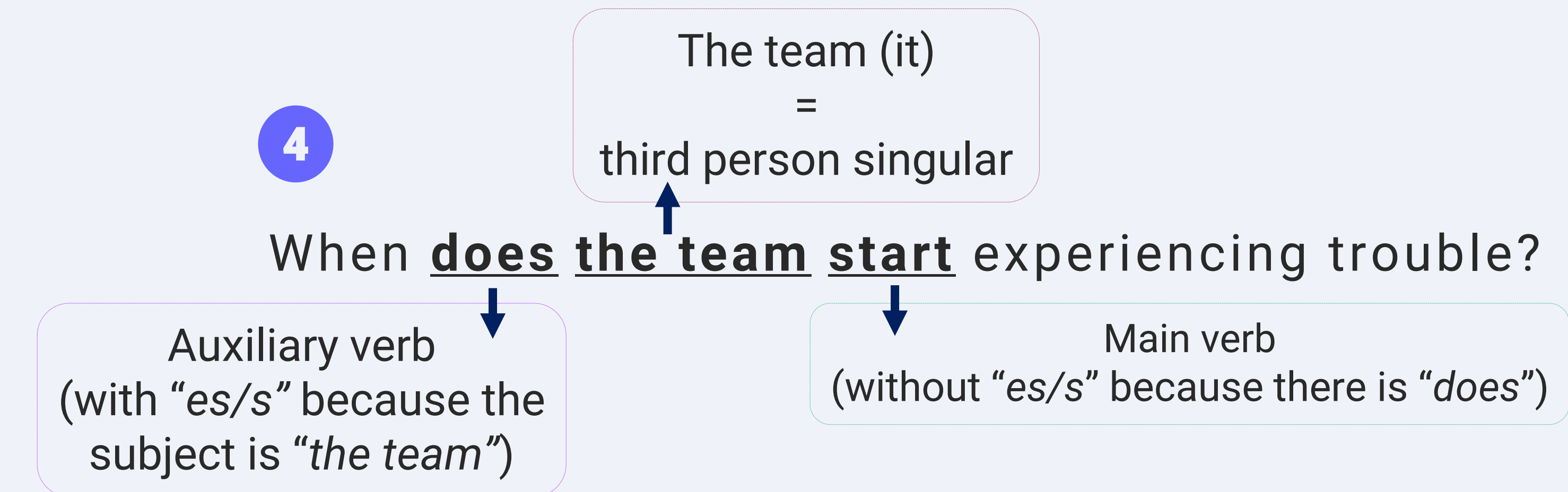
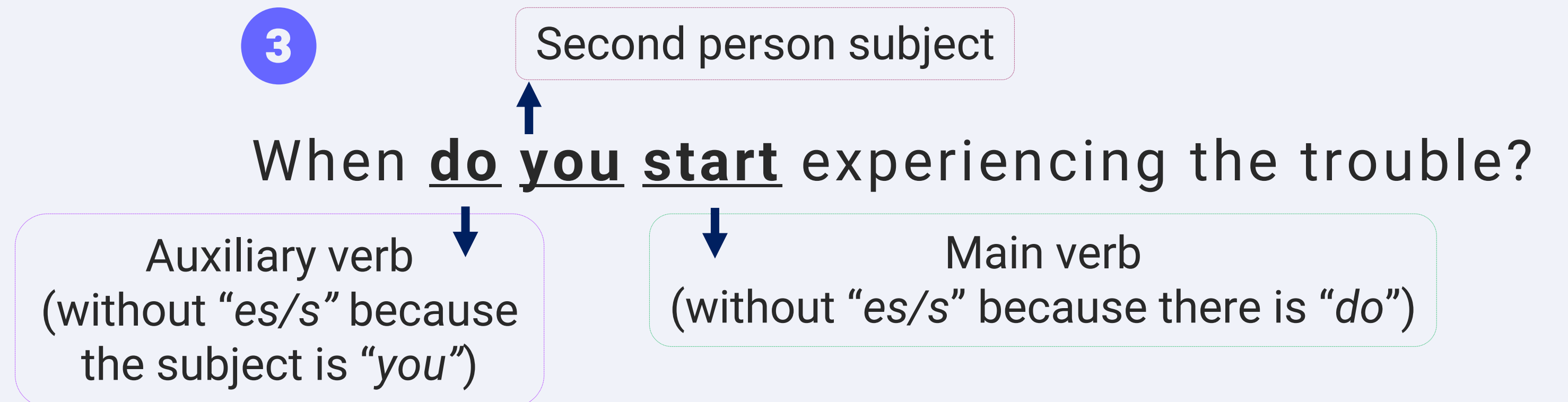
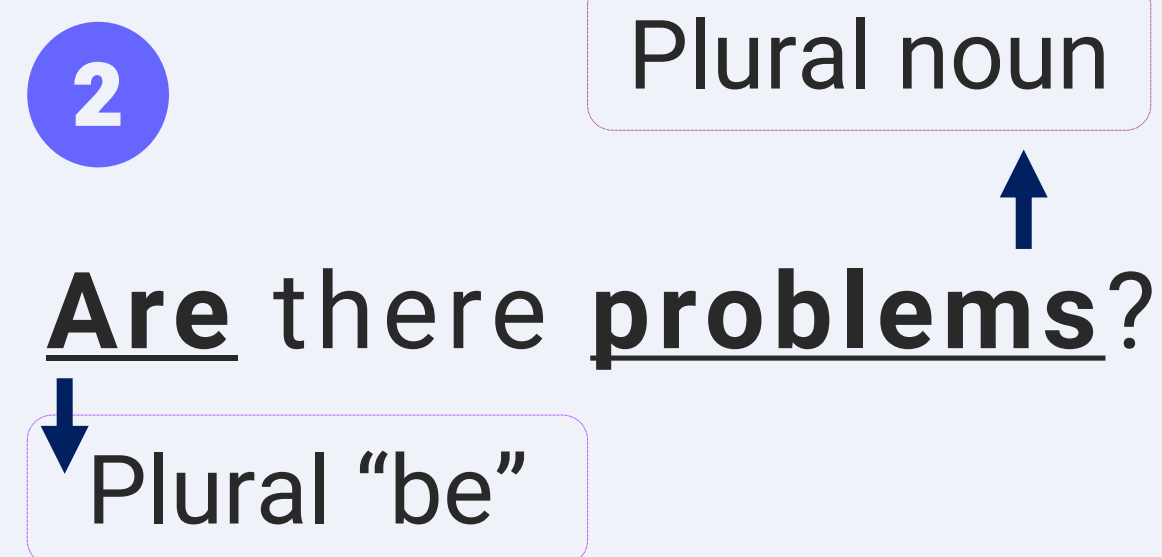
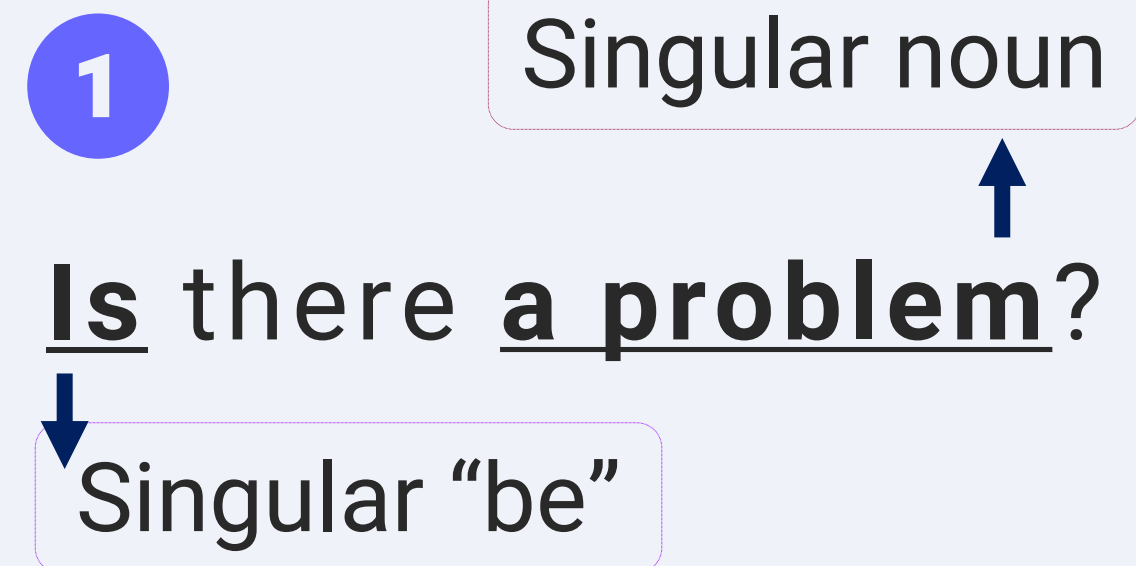


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# Language Focus

## Subject Verb Agreement

In English, the subject of a sentence must align with the main verb of that same sentence.  
Study the sentences below.





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5

Singular verb (with “s” because of the subject – “the team” = it)

**The team starts** experiencing problem since last week

↓  
The team (it)  
=  
third person singular

he	+ “s” or “es” at the end of the verb
she	
it	

6

Plural verb (referring to the plural subject)

**The people in the team address** the matter directly

↓  
Plural subject (the people = plural)



# Language Focus

## Subject Verb Agreement Exercise

Complete the following cloze sentences with the correct verb.

1. The new recruits \_\_\_\_\_ (be) very qualified.
2. This order \_\_\_\_\_ (be) undercharged, we should correct the invoice.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (be) room 350 double booked? This room \_\_\_\_\_ appeared in the reservation list twice.
4. These projectors must be returned because they \_\_\_\_\_ (be) defective.
5. The clients \_\_\_\_\_ (like) our pitch because our pitch \_\_\_\_\_ (interest) them the most.





# Language Focus

## Subject Verb Agreement Answer Key

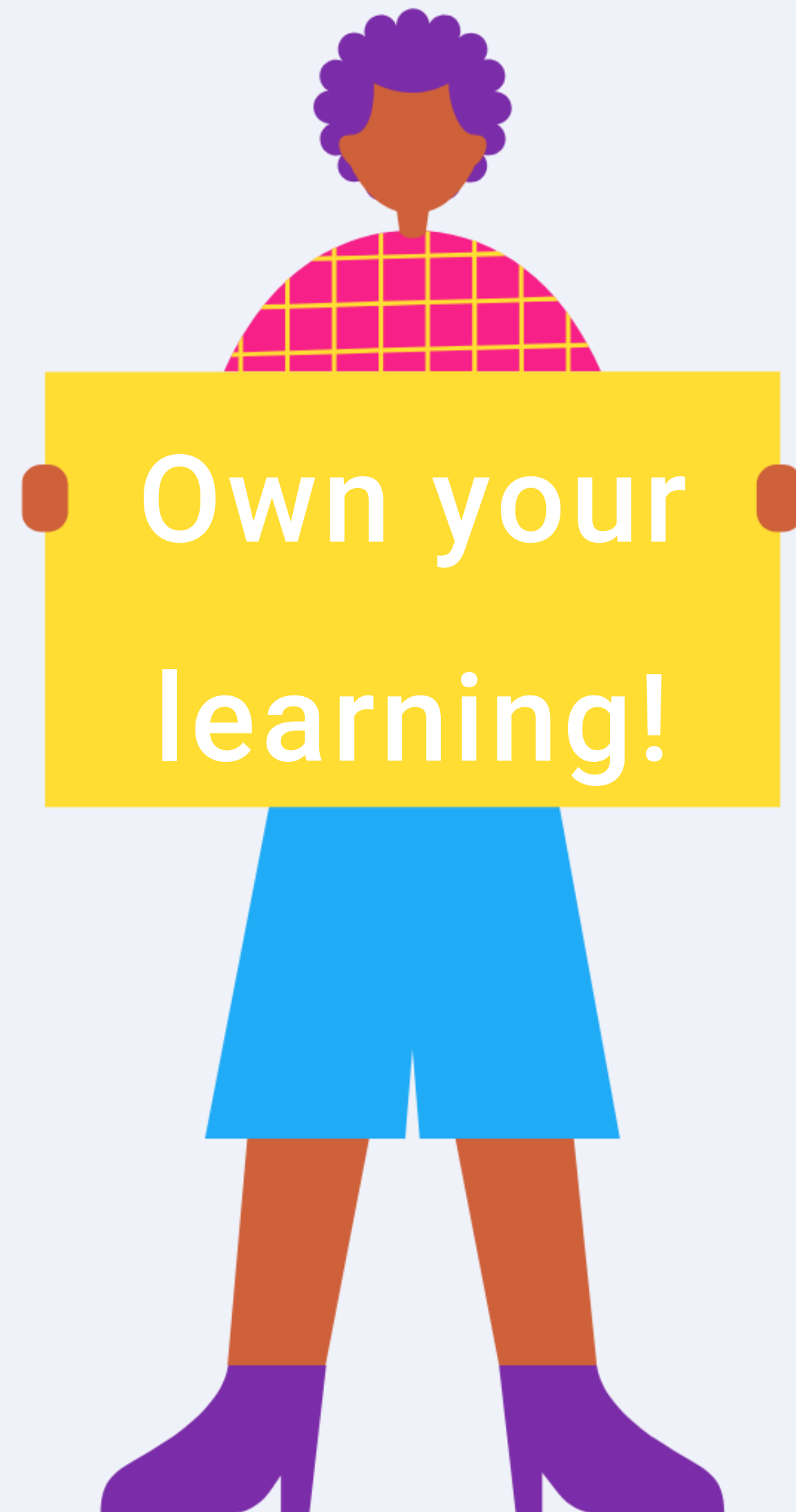
Complete the following cloze sentences with the correct verb.

1. The new recruits are (be) very qualified.
2. This order is (be) undercharged, we should correct the invoice.
3. Is (be) room 350 double booked? This room has appeared in the reservation list twice.
4. These projectors must be returned because they are (be) defective.
5. The clients like (like) our pitch because our pitch interests (interest) them the most.



# Learning Reflection

Think of today's learning session and answer the following questions



What new knowledge have you obtained today?  
(Could be a new concept(s) or new vocabulary items)

What's your favorite part of today's learning topic?

What do you think you can do with what you have learnt  
today?



# Thank you.



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