

# Technical Writing Skills

SD-100

Technical Language - Sentences

# Learning Objectives

- ▶ Identify subjects and verbs, as well as establish appropriate subject-verb agreement.

# Discussion

- ▶ What comes to mind when you think of grammar?
- ▶ Did you enjoy studying grammar in school?
- ▶ What professions need to use grammar on a daily basis?

# Exercise

Developer #1 created a bug. The bug was found in the JavaScript. It was read by the browser and caused a formatting issue. Wanting to optimize it, some code got deleted. The developer committed the code to the repository. Developer #2 was present and assisted. He had to explain to his supervisor what happened. He ended up having to spend the weekend fixing it.

- ▶ Who tried to optimize the code?
- ▶ Who found the bug?
- ▶ What did developer # 2 assist with?
- ▶ Who had to fix the bug over the weekend?

# Review - Nouns and Verbs

For more information, refer to Grammar - Effective Writing, *Blue Book*, pp. 1-3

# Review - Nouns and Verbs

## ▶ Noun

- A person, place, thing or idea.

## ▶ Types of Nouns

- Common Nouns (e.g. man, city, award, honesty)
- Proper Nouns (e.g. Johnathan, Chicago, JavaScript)
- Compound Nouns (e.g. tennis court, gas station)

## ▶ Verbs

- A verb is a word or set of words that shows action (runs, is going, has been painting); feeling (loves, envies); or state of being (am, are, is, have been, was, seem).

# Sentence Structure

All English sentences must contain a subject and a verb.



<http://elss.elc.cityu.edu.hk/ELSS/Resource/Subject%20-verb%20agreement/>

# Subjects and Verbs

- ▶ A subject is the noun, pronoun or a set of words that performs the verb.

**Rule #1:** To find the subject, look for the verb first. Then ask who or what performed the action.

The jet engine passed inspection.

Subject

Verb



# Subjects and Verbs

From the ceiling hung the chandelier.

Verb

Subject

# Subjects and Verbs

**Rule #2:** Sentences can have more than one subject and more than one verb.

- ▶ I like cake, and he likes ice cream. (Two subjects and two verbs)
- ▶ He and I like cake. (Two subjects and one verb)
- ▶ She lifts weights and jogs daily. (One subject and two verbs).

# Subjects and Verbs

**Rule #3:** If a verb follows to, it is called an infinitive, and it is not the main verb. You would find the main verb either before or after the infinitive.

## Examples

He is trying to leave.

- He (*subject*) is trying (*verb*) to leave. (*infinitive*)

To leave was his wish.

- To leave (*infinitive*) was (*verb*) his (*subject*) wish.

# Subjects and Verbs

**Rule #4:** Any request or command, such as Stop! Or Walk quickly, has the understood subject you, because if we ask who is to stop or walk quickly, the answer must be “you.”

## Examples

Please bring me some coffee

- Bring is the verb.
- Who will do the bringing? The subject you is understood.

# Activity #1

The background of the slide is a dark charcoal grey. On the right side, there is a complex, abstract geometric pattern composed of numerous overlapping triangles. These triangles are in various shades of blue and teal, ranging from a very light, almost white-blue to a deep, dark teal. The pattern creates a sense of depth and movement, with some triangles appearing to recede into the background while others come forward. The overall effect is modern and minimalist.

# Subject Verb-Agreement

The threading is not compatible with these bolts, which **was** discussed during the first inspection.

- What was discussed during the first inspection? (the problem)

The threading is not compatible with these bolts, which **were** discussed during the first inspection.

- What was discussed during the first inspection? (bolts)

# Subject-Verb Agreement

**Basic rule:** A singular subject (he, Jane, car) takes a singular verb (is, goes, shines), whereas a plural subject takes a plural verb.

- ▶ Identifying the right subject and verb will help you correct errors of subject-verb agreement.

## Example

The *list* of items *is/are* on the desk.

- *is* is the verb.
- *list* is the subject

# Activity #2





# Subject-Verb Agreement

**Rule 1:** A subject will come before a phrase beginning with of. This is a key rule for understanding subjects.

## Example

A bouquet of yellow roses lends color and fragrance to the room.

# Subject-Verb Agreement

**Rule 2:** Two singular subjects connected by or, either/or, or neither/nor require a singular verb.

## Examples

My aunt or my uncle **is arriving** by train today

Neither Juan nor Carmen **is** available.

Either Kiana or Casey **is helping** today with stage decorations.

# Subject-Verb Agreement

**Rule 3:** The verb in an or, either/or, or neither/nor sentence agrees with the noun or pronoun closest to it.

## Example

Neither the plates nor the serving bowl goes on that shelf.

Neither the serving bowls nor the plates go on that shelf.

# Subject-Verb Agreement

**Rule 4:** A general rule, use a plural verb with two or more subjects when they are connected by and.

## Example

A car and a bike **are** my means of transportation.

## Exceptions - compound nouns

Breaking and entering **is** against the law.

The bed and breakfast **was** charming.

# Subject-Verb Agreement

**Rule 5:** Sometimes the subject is separated from the verb by such words as along with, as well as, besides, not, etc. These words and phrases are not part of the subject. Ignore them and use a singular verb when the subject is singular.

## Examples

The politician, along with the newsmen, **is** expected shortly.

Excitement, as well as nervousness, **is** the cause of her shaking.

# Subject-Verb Agreement

**Rule 6:** With words that indicate portions - percent, a lot, majority, some, all, etc. - Rule 1 given earlier is reversed, and we are guided by the noun after of. If the noun after of is singular, use a singular verb. If it is plural, use plural verb.

## Examples

Fifty percent of the *pie* **has** disappeared

Fifty percent of the *pies* **have** disappeared

A third of the *city* **is** unemployed.

A third of the *people* **are** unemployed.

All of the *pie* **is** gone.

All of the *pies* **are** gone.

# Subject-Verb Agreement

**Rule 7:** In sentences beginning with here or there, the true subject follows the verb.

## *Examples*

There **are** four **hurdles** to jump.

There **is** a high **hurdle** to jump.

Here **are** the **keys**.

# Subject-Verb Agreement

**Rule 8:** Use a singular verb with distances, periods of time, sums of money, etc., when considered as a unit.

## Examples

Three miles **is** too far to walk.

Five years **is** the maximum sentence for that offense.

Ten dollars **is** a high price to pay.

**BUT** you can say:

Ten dollars (when referring to the dollar bills) **were** scattered on the floor.



# Subject-Verb Agreement

**Rule 9:** Some collective nouns (family, couple, staff, audience, etc.) may take either a singular or a plural verb, depending on their use in the sentence.

## Examples

The **staff** **is** in a meeting.

- The **staff** is acting as a unit.

The **couple** **disagree** about disciplining their child.

- The **couple** refers to two people who are acting as individuals.

# Activity #3

How did you do?

► For more practice:

- [http://www.grammarbook.com/grammar\\_quiz/finding\\_subjects\\_verbs\\_1.asp](http://www.grammarbook.com/grammar_quiz/finding_subjects_verbs_1.asp)
- [http://www.grammarbook.com/grammar\\_quiz/finding\\_subjects\\_verbs\\_2.asp](http://www.grammarbook.com/grammar_quiz/finding_subjects_verbs_2.asp)