

Subject–Verb Agreement Rules

Key: subject = **yellow, bold**; verb = green, underline

Subjects and verbs must agree in number. In addition to the explanations on this page, also see the post on [Subject–Verb Agreement](#).

1. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular too.

Example: **She** writes every day.

Exception: When using the singular "they," use plural verb forms.

Example: The participant expressed satisfaction with their job. **They** are currently in a managerial role at the organization.

2. If the subject is plural, the verb must also be plural.

Example: **They** write every day.

Sometimes, however, it seems a bit more complicated than this.

3. 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.

Example: **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.

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.

Example: **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.

Example: **The student** with all the master's degrees **is** very motivated.

Example: **Strategies** that the teacher uses to encourage classroom participation **include** using small groups and clarifying expectations.

Example: **The focus** of the interviews **was** nine purposively selected participants.

6. 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.

7. 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** **write** every day.

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

8. 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.

Example: **Neither** alternative hypothesis **was** accepted.

Example: I will offer a \$5 gift card to **everybody** who **participates** in the study.

Example: **No one** **was** available to meet with me at the preferred times.

9. Non count nouns take a singular verb.

Example: **Education** **is** the key to success.

Example: **Diabetes** **affects** many people around the world.

Example: **The information** obtained from the business owners **was** relevant to include in the study.

Example: **The research** I found on the topic **was** limited.

10. 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.

Example: **The proceeds** from the sale **go** to support the homeless population in the city.

Example: **Locally produced goods** **have** the advantage of shorter supply chains.

11. 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**.

Example: There **are** many **factors** affecting teacher retention.

12. 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.

Example: **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.