

Subject-Verb Agreement

In English Language, there are sets of rules that guide the arrangement of words to make grammatically acceptable sentences. These are called the rules of concord. They mostly concern the agreement of subject and verb. The following are the rules of Subject-verb Agreement:

1. A sentence with singular subject takes a singular verb.

Examples: The mad man sleeps under the bridge.

Singular subject singular verb

2. The following expressions are all singular and take singular verbs.

Examples:

- a. Each boy in this class is from a home.
- b. Each of the girls has a school bag.
- c. Either you or Bisi was talking.
- d. Either of these teachers teaches French.
- e. Neither of the boys comes early to school.
- f. Every parent prays for the children.
- g. Everybody prefers the new Principal.
- h. Anybody is allowed to enter.
- i. Nobody was happy about the increase in the fuel price.
- j. One of the drivers was drunk.
- k. None of the gifts was wrapped.

3. Whenever two singular subjects are separated by 'or' /'nor', the sentence takes a singular verb.

Examples:

- a. The man or the wife is telling a lie.
- b. Neither the boy nor the girl believes the other.

4. Two nouns that create the impression of a unit and thus constantly go together take singular verbs.

Examples:

- a. Bread and tea is good for breakfast.

- b. Teaching and learning is a serious business.
5. A sentence with a singular subject having intervening expressions introduced by *with*, *like*, *as well as* takes a singular verb.

Examples:

- a. The President, with his Ministers, was at Abuja.
- b. Mr. Ibrahim, like Mrs. Olowe, comes early to school.
- c. Mr. Oladosu, as well as Mrs. Oladosu, teaches in the new school.
6. A sentence that has a plural subject takes a plural verb.
- Examples:
- a. The thieves are notorious.
- b. Igbo men are good husbands.
- c. Ijesa people are enterprising.
7. A sentence that has two singular subjects joined by *and* takes a plural verb.

Examples:

- a. The man and his wife are loving people.
- b. The cat and the rat are great enemies.
- c. Njoku and Diokpa are excellent students.
8. When sentence has two plural subjects joined by *and*, the verb is plural.

Examples:

- a. The students and the teachers have agreed on the day of the test.
- b. Men and women live together.
9. Whenever two plural subjects are separated by either... or, neither ... nor; both ... and; all ... but, the verb is plural.

Examples:

- a. Either the men or the women have broken the rule.
- b. Neither the priest nor the worshippers understand their idol.
- c. Both Lara and Lekan are happy to go to JS 3.

- d. All but Dabiri are honest.
 - e. All of you but Cecilia are correct.
10. Some nouns are plural though we regard them as single objects. They usually take a plural verb, eg. Scissors, trousers, pliers. Spectacles.
- Examples:
- a. My spectacles are in the car.
 - b. My trousers are dirty.
 - c. The pliers are loose.
11. Collective nouns used as subjects take singular or plural verbs.
- Examples:
- a. The committee is sitting at noon.
 - b. The committee were asked to raise funds for the inter-house sports competition.

CLASSWORK

1. Everyone of the men (has/have) been paid.
2. Joseph like all other students, (comes/come) early.
3. The students (attend/attends) classes regularly.
4. This unit (has/have) taught me a lot.
5. The man (don't/doesn't) like insults.
6. The book (is/are) on the shelf.
7. The Principal, as well as the teachers, (is/are) hardworking.
8. Bisiriyu, together with his children, (attends/attend) the Anglican Church.
9. The Commissioner, accompanied by the Tutor-General, (go/goes) round the schools.
10. Everybody (dislike/dislikes) being cheated.