

THE BEST ACT PREP COURSE EVER

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

ACT English: Problem Set

Circle the correct use of subject-verb agreement.

1. Last night, the sirens from a fire truck down the street (was / were) so loud that they woke up everyone in the neighborhood.
2. No one (know / knows) how to build the new furniture recently delivered to the house.
3. Jack and Andy learned how to swim yesterday and (is / are) excited to continue lessons tomorrow.
4. Each of the children (want / wants) rewards for doing household chores.
5. Photographers who are working on an editorial shoot (is / are) briefed on the motif, color stories, and overall design.
6. She loves filling out a calorie intake log, which (tracks / track) how many calories she consumes per day.
7. The plate of cookies on the table (is / are) tempting, but must remain uneaten until all the guests arrive.
8. In the study room, books and papers are stacked high, and the canister of pens and pencils (has / have) tumbled to the ground.
9. Beside the mailbox (stands / stand) a row of marigolds and sunflowers.
10. I bought colorful pots and pans for my best friend, who (is / are) a chef, for her birthday.
11. Latex gloves that (covers / cover) one's skin and (protects / protect) from spills are used in the chemistry laboratory.
12. The offspring of the wolves (stalk / stalks) the abandoned campsite in the woods for its next prey.
13. Artwork by Ai Weiwei, Jeff Koons, and Yayoi Kusama (adorns / adorn) many contemporary museums.
14. Their van, full of soccer shoes, jerseys and other gear, (was / were) broken into in the middle of the night.
15. Inside the conference room, where the charity board members will convene, (is / are) boxes of files yet to be sorted and put away.
16. "The Catcher in the Rye" and "Franny and Zooey" (is / are) two of J.D. Salinger's most well-known works.
17. The porcelain ballerina, delicately designed with embroidery and ornate beads, (spin / spins) inside the jewelry box.
18. Jenna's extensive collection of dolls (sits / sit) on her bedroom shelf.
19. Behind the curtain (stand / stands) the cast waiting for the final bows.
20. He insisted on getting his car repaired even if everything (works / work) properly.
21. The scientist studied the most common species that (have / has) recently migrated the region in hopes of identifying their flight paths.
22. Now, on top of the pile (lie / lay / lays / lies) an affidavit and a packet of information pertaining to the case.
23. The fire left behind a substantial amount of soot on the sidewalks. All (was / were) removed by cleaning crews hired by the city.
24. Each of the girls (was / were) excited to share stories.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

1. At London's Tate Modern Gallery, visitors walk through the first floor installation where machines generates light, sound, and moving elements according to vibrations in the space.
A. NO CHANGE
B. installation where machine's generates
C. installation, machines generates
D. installation where machines generate
2. Cellists, violinists, bassists: each were waiting for the conductor to signal the start of the piece.
A. NO CHANGE
B. all were
C. was each
D. all was
3. Although Andrea repeatedly washed the tablecloth, small red spots of the wine stain remains against the white fabric.
A. NO CHANGE
B. remains:
C. remain
D. are remaining
4. The songwriter of the star's latest hits are not new to the business – his career spans over 15 years.
A. NO CHANGE
B. songwriter of the star's latest hits is
C. songwriters of the star's latest hits are
D. songwriters of the star's latest hits is
5. In Le Marais, a historical Parisian neighborhood lined with cobblestones, tourists wander into shops as locals dines in cafes tucked into street corners.
A. NO CHANGE
B. shops where locals dine
C. shops, locals dine
D. shops as locals dine
6. Meteorites begin to fall when they travel too close to Earth and get caught in its gravitational pull. During the meteorite's descent from space, other pieces of the rock detach and bumps into the original rock.
A. NO CHANGE
B. bump
C. has bumped
D. bumped
7. The energetic dog knocked the paint can over, so white paw prints now stamps the couple's hardwood floors.
A. NO CHANGE
B. now are stamping
C. stamps:
D. stamp
8. Penny, a pastry chef who trained under top French patisseries, are no stranger to the industry.
A. NO CHANGE
B. chefs who trained under top French patisseries, is
C. chefs who trained under top French patisseries, are
D. chef who trained under top French patisseries, is
9. Authors, editors, students, professors: all was listening intently to the guest speaker who was a foreign correspondent in several war-torn countries.
A. NO CHANGE
B. each were
C. all were
D. all of them was

ANSWER KEY

1. Last night, the sirens from a fire truck down the street (**was** / **were**) so loud that they woke up everyone in the neighborhood.
2. No one (**know** / **knows**) how to build the new furniture recently delivered to the house.
3. Jack and Andy learned how to swim yesterday and (**is** / **are**) excited to continue lessons tomorrow.
4. Each of the children (**want** / **wants**) rewards for doing household chores.
5. Photographers who are working on an editorial shoot (**is** / **are**) briefed on the motif, color stories, and overall design.
6. She loves filling out a calorie intake log, which (**tracks** / **track**) how many calories she consumes per day.
7. The plate of cookies on the table (**is** / **are**) tempting, but must remain uneaten until all the guests arrive.
8. In the study room, books and papers are stacked high, and the canister of pens and pencils (**has** / **have**) tumbled to the ground.
9. Beside the mailbox (**stands** / **stand**) a row of marigolds and sunflowers.
10. I bought colorful pots and pans for my best friend, who (**is** / **are**) a chef, for her birthday.
11. Latex gloves that (**covers** / **cover**) one's skin and (**protects** / **protect**) from spills are used in the chemistry laboratory.
12. The offspring of the wolves (**stalk** / **stalks**) the abandoned campsite in the woods for its next prey. (Note that "offspring" can be singular or plural -- in context "its" tells us it is singular)
13. Artwork by Ai Weiwei, Jeff Koons, and Yayoi Kusama (**adorns** / **adorn**) many contemporary museums.
14. Their van, full of soccer shoes, jerseys and other gear, (**was** / **were**) broken into in the middle of the night.
15. Inside the conference room, where the charity board members will convene, (**is** / **are**) boxes of files yet to be sorted and put away.
16. "The Catcher in the Rye" and "Franny and Zooey" (**is** / **are**) two of J.D. Salinger's most well-known works.
17. The porcelain ballerina, delicately designed with embroidery and ornate beads, (**spin** / **spins**) inside the jewelry box.
18. Jenna's extensive collection of dolls (**sits** / **sit**) on her bedroom shelf.
19. Behind the curtain (**stand** / **stands**) the cast waiting for the final bows.
20. He insisted on getting his car repaired even if everything (**works** / **work**) properly.
21. The scientist studied the most common species that (**have** / **has**) recently migrated the region in hopes of identifying their flight paths. (Species can be singular or plural; in context, "their" makes it plural for this sentence).
22. Now, on top of the pile (**lie** / **lay** / **lays** / **lies**) an affidavit and a packet of information pertaining to the case. (We have to know both verb tense and subject verb agreement to get this one right, and we must know the difference between lay/lie) AGREEMENT: though it sounds singular, the subject is plural (subject follows verb connected with the word "and"). So "they (**lie** / **lay** / **lays** / **lies**)" is narrowed to (lie/lay) (lays and lies are singular verbs). TENSE: "NOW" indicates present tense. Remember that "lay" is a transitive verb—someone LAYS something on the table—"lay" indicates ACTION in the present tense. Here, the stuff is just sitting on the table -- it isn't being moved there by anyone. Therefore we want to lie as the verb family and the present tense form of that, which is "lie." True, "lay" is also the past tense of "lie" (to recline or exist in a position). "Lay" could be correct if the sentence were in past tense OR if someone was actively "laying" the packet on the table. Phew!
23. The fire left behind a substantial amount of soot on the sidewalks. All (**was** / **were**) removed by cleaning crews hired by the city. Words such as "all" and "some" change number according to their antecedents. You must know what "all" refers to—here it refers to the soot—a mass noun that is not plural. So "was" is appropriate. In other instances, "all" could refer to something plural. Watch out!
24. Each of the girls (**was** / **were**) excited to share stories. "Each" makes everything singular that follows—so any verbs, pronouns or nouns that have to match the subject are affected. A single person can share many stories, so that is not a clue to whether this is singular or plural.

ANSWER KEY

1. D 2. B 3. C 4. B 5. D 6. B 7. D 8. D 9. C

ANSWER EXPLANATIONS

1. D The subject is “machines,” so the verb must be singular “generate.”
2. B The verb is plural “were” and must correspond to the subject, which refers to “all” the musicians.
3. C The subject is “small red spots,” so the verb must be plural “remain.”
4. B The subject is “songwriter,” so the verb must be singular “is.”
5. D The subject is “locals,” so the verb must be plural “dine.” Answer (C) is a run on sentence or comma splice error, so the answer is (D). Answer (B) is confusing sounding -- people don’t eat in shops; they eat in cafes.
6. B The subject is “pieces of rock,” so the verb must be plural “bump.” Also, “bump” keeps the verb tense parallel, where as “has bumped” shifts the verb tense inappropriately. “AND” always links verbs of either identical tense or complementary tenses.
7. D The subject is “white paw prints,” so the verb must be plural “stamp.” The progressive form in “B” you could argue is also plural, but it indicates the stamping action is going on -- “are stamped” indicates that an action was previously done to the floor (it’s a past participle description -- i.e. the difference between the cookies “are baking” and the cookies “are baked”). The past tense action at the beginning of the sentence suggests that we cannot pick answer (B) because the offense already occurred in the past.
8. D The subject is “chef,” so the verb must be singular “is.”
9. C The subject is plural “all,” so the verb “were” must correspond, referring to “all” the guests listening to the speaker. Here you might notice the colon is used in a way that breaks the traditional rule of colons -- but you can’t change that part of the sentence so don’t worry about it.