

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT WORKSHOP

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT GUIDELINES

1. **Intervening Expressions**

Mark out the intervening expression to find the subject and verb. Then check for agreement.

EX:

The *evidence* that they submitted to the judges *was* not convincing.

The new *library* with its many books and its quiet reading rooms *makes* *studying* easier.

The *list* of graduating seniors *was posted* on the bulletin board.

Our big maple *tree* as well as our small ribbon tree *was damaged* by the high winds.

The famous *rock star* along with his many fans *was trying* to enter the Delta Center.

My *uncle*, together with his two brothers, *is planning* to open a restaurant at the park.

2. **Verb preceding the subject**

Watch words like *there*, *here*, *where*. They always throw the subject to the position following the verb.

EX:

There is in many countries much *unrest* today.

There are a *sofa*, two *lamps*, four armchairs, and a *desk* in the living room.

Where are *Marcia* and her *children* going?

3. **Indefinite and Definite Pronouns**

A. *Indefinite pronouns that are always singular are*

another somebody no one everyone everybody

either anybody nobody one nobody

somebody each everybody someone anyone

anybody neither

None when used without a prepositional phrase is always singular.

The adjective *every* is always followed by a *singular verb*.

B. *Indefinite pronouns that are always plural are*

both many few several

4. Compound Subjects joined by and

EX:

Quantity and *quality* are often demanded by business.

Where are the *earrings* and *pins*?

These constructions are usually plural unless they are thought of as a unit or actually refer to the same person or thing. In which case they are singular.

EX:

The *sum* and *substance* of the issue is we are broke.

My *friend* and *coworker* Mr. Jones is now going to speak to you.

5. **Subjects joined with Or and Nor**

Always choose the subject nearest to the verb to agree with the verb.

Include *Neither/nor, Either/or*

Note: *Neither/Either* alone are always singular. It is when they work with *nor/or* that this rule applies.

6. **Nouns in plural form (ending with S)**

A. Nouns that end in s but have a singular meaning always use the singular verb: *news, economics, ethics, physics, mathematics, gallows, mumps, measles, shambles, whereabouts, gymnastics*

EX:

The *news* is now reported at nine o'clock on some channels.

B. Some nouns ending in s are always plural: *tactics, trousers, scissors, athletics, tidings, acoustics, riches*

EX:

The *scissors* *have* been damaged.

C. Those nouns working as a unit or denoting mass or quantity are always singular. Include *time, distance, money*.

EX:

Five miles *is* too far for her to walk.

Fifty gallons *was* all the vat would hold.

D. Mathematical equations use the singular verb.

7. **Determining Modifiers**

Expressions such as *a percentage of, a part of, a fraction of, some, all, most, more, any, none* depend on the object of the preposition to determine if the verb is a singular or plural form.

EX:

Some of the pie *is* missing.

Some of the pies *are* missing.

A. The number always uses a singular verb.

EX:

The number of students at the party *was* small.

B. A number always uses a plural verb.

EX:

A small number of students *were* representing the school.

8. **Verbs always agree with subjects.**

EX:

The only *fruit* that we have now *is* bananas.

Bananas are the only fruit that we have now.

9. **Relative pronoun as subject of the dependent clause**

The number and person of the verb are determined by the antecedent (word the relative pronoun is renaming and following) of that pronoun.

EX:

This is the student *who is* to be honored.

These are the students *who are* to be honored.

Should I, *who am* so timid, be required to speak in public.

She is one of those happy people *who are* always making friends.

Note: If the last sentence gives you trouble, try beginning the sentence with “of” phrase, and you will be able to see what the antecedent is.

EX:

Of those happy *people who are* always making friends she is one.

10. **Collective nouns**

When the noun is working as a unit, use the singular verb. When the noun refers to individual members, use the plural verb.

EX:

The *jury has* reached its decision.

The *jury are* arguing over the case. (Think of jury members)

Note: When referring to the individuals that make up a group, we usually use such phrases as “the players on,” “the members of,” and so on.

EX:

The members of the jury *are* arguing over the case.

11. **Watch nouns that come from foreign languages. They usually have irregular endings.**

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
medium	media	alumnus	alumni
criterion	criteria	alumna	alumnae
datum	data	index	indices
phenomenon	phenomena	crisis	crises