



APSU Writing Center

Subject and Verb Agreement

Making Subjects and Verbs Agree

Resources: *The OWL at Purdue* website

- If the subject is in singular form, the verb must also be singular; however, plural subjects require plural verbs. For present tense verbs, the general rule is that if the subject ends in *s*, the verb does not; if the verb ends in *s*, the subject does not.
 - **Example:** *The woman walks* one mile every day.
 - **Example:** *The women walk* one mile every day.
- When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns that are connected by ‘and,’ use a plural verb.
 - **Example:** *She and her friends are* at the fair.
 - **Example:** *Joggers and sprinters require* supportive running shoes.
- When two or more singular nouns or pronouns are connected by ‘or’ or ‘nor,’ use a singular verb.
 - **Example:** *The book or the pen is* in the drawer.
 - **Example:** Neither *the professor nor his assistant knows* the answer.
- 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 nearer the verb.
 - **Example:** *The boy or his friends run* every day.
 - **Example:** *His friends or the boy runs* every day.
- ‘Doesn’t’ is a contraction of ‘does not’ and should be used only with a singular subject. On the other hand, ‘don’t’ is a contraction of ‘do not’ and should be used only with a plural subject.
 - **Example:** *He doesn't like* it.
 - **Example:** *They don't like* it.
 - The exception to this rule appears in the case of the first person and second person pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’. With these pronouns, the contraction ‘don’t’ should be used.
 - **Example:** *I don't like* it.
 - **Example:** *He doesn't like* it.
 - **Example:** *You don't like* it
- The words ‘each,’ ‘each one,’ ‘either,’ ‘neither,’ ‘everyone,’ ‘everybody,’ ‘anybody,’ ‘anyone,’ ‘nobody,’ ‘somebody,’ ‘someone,’ and ‘no one’ are singular and require a singular verb.
 - *Each* of these hot dogs **is** juicy.
 - *Everybody* **knows** Mr. Jones.
 - *No one* **appreciates** harsh criticism.
 - *Someone* **likes** you.
 - Neither the *professor nor his assistant* **knows** the answer.



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- Do not be misled by a phrase that comes between the subject and the verb. The verb agrees with the *subject*, not with a noun or pronoun in the phrase.
 - *One of the boxes* **is** open.
 - *The team captain*, as well as his players, **is** anxious.
 - *The book*, including all the chapters in the first section, **is** boring.
 - *The woman* with all the dogs **walks** down my street.
- Nouns such as ‘civics,’ ‘mathematics,’ ‘dollars,’ ‘measles,’ and ‘news’ require singular verbs.
 - *The news* **is** on at six.
- Note: The word *dollars* is a special case. When talking about an amount of money, it requires a singular verb, but when referring to the noun dollars themselves, a plural verb is required.
 - *Five dollars* **is** a lot of money.
 - *Dollars* **are** often used instead of rubles in Russia.
- Nouns such as ‘scissors,’ ‘tweezers,’ ‘trousers,’ and ‘shears’ require plural verbs. (There are two parts to these things.)
 - *These scissors* **are** dull.
 - *Those trousers* **are** made of wool.
- 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.
 - There **are** *many questions*.
 - There **is** *a question*.
- Collective nouns are words that imply more than one person, but that are considered singular and take a singular verb, such as the nouns ‘group,’ ‘team,’ ‘committee,’ ‘class,’ and ‘family’.
 - *The team* **runs** during practice.
 - *The committee* **decides** how to proceed.
 - *The family* **has** a long history.
 - *My family* **has never been able to agree**.
- In some cases, a sentence may call for the use of a plural verb when using a collective noun.
 - *The crew* **are preparing** to dock the ship.
 - This sentence is referring to the individual efforts of each crew member.
- Expressions such as ‘with,’ ‘together with,’ ‘including,’ ‘accompanied by,’ ‘in addition to,’ or ‘as well’ do not change the number of the subject. If the subject is singular, the verb is, too.
 - *The President*, accompanied by his wife, **is** traveling to India.
 - *All of the books*, including yours, **are** in that box.