

Subject/Verb Agreement, Speaking and Listening

Section Objectives:

- Practice the behaviors of effective, active listeners.
- Students will show the ability to create agreement between subjects and verbs as well as pronouns and antecedents.
- Students will be able to identify and explain the characteristics of various types of meter used in poetry

Grammar

Usage: Subject / Verb Agreement

Singular / Plural

Nouns / Pronouns

A word that refers to one person or thing is considered *singular*. If the word refers to more than one person or one thing, then the word is considered *plural*.

Singular

cake
child
this
I
he, she, it

Plural

cakes
children
these
we
they

Verbs

Traditionally, present tense verbs that end in s are singular.

The boy sees his mother

If the present tense verb does not end in s, then the verb is plural.

The boys see their mothers.

1. A verb agrees with its subject in number.

Singular: My *friend realizes* she hurt me.

Plural: My *friends realize* they hurt me.

2. ***Intervening Phrases:*** The number of the subject is not changed by a phrase following the subject.

Lunch is late.

Lunch for all students **is** late.

3. Indefinite pronouns can be both singular and plural.

The following are singular:

each	either	one	no one
anyone	neither	someone	every one
everybody	somebody	everyone	

Each is to have a big piece of pie.

The following are plural:

several	few	both	many
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Many were transferred last week.

The following may be singular or plural, depending on the meaning of the sentence:

some	any	none	all	most
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Some of the material **was damaged**.

Some of the problems **were** hard.

4. Compound subjects can be with singular and plural verbs.

*Subjects joined by **and** take a plural verb.*

Jack and Jill were hurt.

*Singular subjects joined by **or** or **nor** take a singular verb.*

Either **Sue or Chris was** going to win.

Neither **Mom or Dad is** willing to let us go.

*When a singular and a plural subject are joined by **or** or **nor**, the verb agrees with the nearer subject.*

Either the **principal or the teachers are** upset.

Note: These rules are used when writing formal English. With informal English, some of these rules may be overlooked.

5. Other problems can be singular or plural.

When the subject follows the verb, as in questions and in sentences beginning with here and there, be careful to determine the subject and make sure that the verb agrees with it.

Where **are** the **paints and crayons**?

Here **is** the **plant**.

Collective nouns (names of groups: team, club, committee, etc.) can be singular or plural, depending on the intention.

More Collective Nouns

army	crowd	orchestra
audience	group	public
class	jury	team

The **team** **has** won.

The **team** **have agreed** to the terms of the contract by a vote of twenty-one to five.

Expressions stating amount (time, money, weight, volume, etc.) are usually singular when meaning one amount, but can be plural if the units should be separate.

Fifty pounds **is** too much to lose in one month.

The last **seven days** **were** tough.

Books and organizations, even if plural in form, takes a singular verb.

Giants of the Earth does not interest the whole group.

There are a few nouns that even though plural in form, take a singular verb.

mumps	measles	mathematics
physics	civics	economics

Physics **was** so hard for us.

When the subject and the predicate noun are different in number, the verb agrees with the subject, not with the predicate noun.

The team and managers were the symbol of success.

Every and many a before a word or series of word is followed by a singular verb.

Every child hopes to win.

Many a student has regretted procrastination.

Don't and doesn't must agree with its subject.

I don't like peas.

You don't like lectures.

He doesn't understand.

They don't care about us.

We don't want any.

*For formal English, verbs in clauses that follow **one of those** are almost always plural.*

Natalie is **one of those players** who never **miss** practice.

*The word **number** when followed by the word **of** is singular when preceded by **the**; it is **plural** when preceded by **a**.*

The number of students taking the course **was** unprecedented.

A number of nurses **have** gathered together to make the wishes known.

Practice

Subject/ Verb Agreement

Directions: Select the appropriate verb to go with each subject.

1. The wishes of the parents (was, were) obeyed.
2. Some of the books (was, were) too battered to sell.
3. Each pencil (is, are) sharpened.
4. Neither the forwards or Sam (has, have) thought about this Friday's game.
5. Student council with its ten committee heads (force, forces) us to be involved with, at least, one committee.
6. The Tale of Two Cities (was, were) made into a movie for television.
7. Neither physics or mathematics (is, are) his best subject.
8. The Steelers is one of those teams that (rallies, rally) in the last quarter.
9. Each of the gifts (comes, come) as a peace offering.
10. None of the apples (was, were) rotten.

Growth Activity

1. Analyze the subject / predicate agreement in your own writing.

