

## Subject-Verb Agreement

- A. Number is the form a word takes to indicate whether the word is singular or plural
- When a word refers to one person, place, thing, or idea, it is singular in number.  
Example: lesson, box, child, him, each
  - When a word refers to more than one person, place, thing, or idea, it is plural in number.  
Example: lessons, boxes, children, them, many
- B. A verb should agree in number with its subject.
- Singular subjects take singular verbs                      Example:        Our favorite sport is soccer.
  - Plural subjects take plural verbs                              Example:        We enjoy playing soccer.
  - When a sentence contains a verb phrase, the first helping verb in the verb phrase agrees with the subject.  
We have been playing soccer in the park.

Helping Verbs					
am	being	do	have	must	were
are	can	does	is	shall	will
be	could	had	may	should	would
been	did	has	might	was	

- C. The number of a subject is not changed by a phrase or clause following the subject.  
Examples:        This collection of myths and legends is fascinating.  
                      The flowers that I planted in the front yard are in need of water.
- D. The following indefinite pronouns are singular: anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, nothing, no one, one, someone, & something.  
Examples:        Everyone is responsible for bringing his or her own lunch.  
                      Each of these lakes has good fishing and boating.
- E. The following indefinite pronouns are plural: both, few, many, and several  
Examples:        Both of the girls excel at basketball.  
                      Few of the trails are rocky.
- F. The following indefinite pronouns can be singular or plural: all, any, more, most, none, and some  
The object in a prepositional phrase that follows the pronoun indicates whether the pronoun is singular or plural.
- Usually, if the object of the preposition is singular, the pronoun is singular.  
Examples:        Some of the carrots have been sliced.  
                      Most of the campground is occupied.
  - If the object is plural, the pronoun is plural.  
Examples:        Some of the salad is in the refrigerator.  
                      Most of the campsites are occupied.
- G. Subjects joined by and usually take a plural verb.  
Example:        Franco and I look for a book about the life of George Washington Carver.

A compound subject that names only one person or thing takes a singular verb.

Example:        One respected professor and researcher at Tuskegee Institute was George Washington Carver.

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

Example: Neither poverty nor any other hardship was too great an obstacle for Carver.

Plural subjects joined by or or nor take a plural verb.

Example: Neither difficult times nor disappointments were too great an obstacle for Carver.

I. When a singular subject and a plural subject are joined by or or nor, the verb agrees with the subject closest to the verb.

Example: At first, neither the local farmers nor Carver's closest friend was interested in his ideas.

J. When the subject follows the verb, find the subject and make sure the verb agrees with it.

Examples: Here is the list of topics from which you may choose.

When are these books due back to the library?

K. The contractions don't (plural) and doesn't (singular) should agree with their subjects.

Examples: These shoes don't fit me very well.

Doesn't she go to your school?

L. A collective noun may be either singular or plural.

The singular form of a collective noun names a group of people, animals, or things. It takes a singular verb when it refers to the group as a unit.

Examples: The team has been practicing since March.

It takes a plural verb when it refers to the individual parts or members of the group.

Examples: The team have been discussing their strategies with one another.

M. An expression of amount (a measurement, a percentage, or a fraction, etc.) may be singular or plural.

Examples: Ten dollars was my weekly allowance when I was twelve years old.

Ten dollars with consecutive serial numbers were lying on the counter.

N. Some nouns that are plural in form take singular verbs.

Example: Is mumps a contagious disease?

Some nouns that are plural in form take plural verbs.

Example: Where are the scissors?

O. The title of a creative work (such as a book, song, movie, or painting) or the name of a country, city, or organization generally takes a singular verb.

Examples: "The Fox and the Grapes" is a fable by Aesop.

The Cayman Islands is a beautiful vacation spot.