

CONCORD

The rules of subject–verb agreement:

The cornerstone rule of subject–verb agreement is that a third person singular subject (he, businesswoman, John, car) takes a singular verb (is, works, goes, shines), whereas a plural subject (we, workers, John and Anna, cars) takes a plural verb (are, work, go, shine).

While the basic rule is simple, you will often come across examples of subject-verb agreement where the rules are less clear. Below, we explore some common rules for subject–verb agreement. Note that the list is not exhaustive, and that you may find other examples that are not covered by these rules.

RULE-1

If a subordinate clause comes between the subject and the verb, it does not change their agreement.

(Learn more about subordinate clauses here: [link to: "What a Subordinate Clause?" Grammarly.com](#))

The **man**, who is marching up and down the street, **is** very loud.

The **mountains**, which are covered in freshly fallen snow, **look** lovely today.

RULE-2

Also, if there is a prepositional phrase between the subject and the verb, it will usually not change their agreement.

(Learn more about prepositional phrases here: [link to: "What Is a Prepositional Phrase?" Grammarly.com](#))

The **taste** of this apple **is** very peculiar.

The **hikes** around the streets of Sicily **were** very short.

Rule-3

When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by *and*, you will normally use a plural verb.

A subject that is made up of two or more elements is called a *compound subject*.

Harry and **his dog** *are* running down the street.

The cup, the saucer, and all the biscuits *are* broken.

Rule-3

However, if the compound subject refers to the same thing as a whole, then the verb will be singular.

Chicken and **rice** *is* my sister's favourite meal. (Chicken and rice = meal = singular).

Hard work and **dedication** *is* the key to success. (Hard work and dedication = key (to success) = singular).

Rule-4

If the nouns that make up a compound subject are singular and connected by the words 'or', 'nor', 'neither'/'nor', 'either'/'or', or 'not only'/'but also', then the verb is singular.

Neither **Jessica** nor **Christian** *is* coming to the party.

Success or **failure** *is* largely based on luck.

Rule-5

If a compound subject consists of both singular and plural nouns/pronouns, it is the noun/pronoun closest to the verb that determines if the verb is plural or singular. This is called *the rule of proximity*.

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My **cat** or my **dogs** *greet* me at the door.

Neither my **parents** nor my **sister** *remembers* my birthday.

Rule-6

The verb should be singular if the the words 'no', 'each', or 'every' come before the subject.

No **man** *is* an island.

Every **man** and **woman** *is* expected to do their best.

Each of my **sons** *is* very tall.

Rule-7

If a sentence starts with **there** or **here**, the subject will be placed after the verb, but the subject and verb must still agree.

There *is* a strange **man** outside.

Here *are* the **dresses** you ordered.

Rule-8

In questions, the verb comes before the subject. This means that you must consider extra carefully what form the verb should take.

Are **you** leaving for your holiday?

Is this **person** bothering you?

Rule-9

Titles of films, songs, books, etc. are treated as singular and take a singular verb.

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All the White Horses *is* a song by Tori Amos.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince *is* the last film I saw.

Rule-10

Collective nouns such as 'team', 'staff', 'family', 'board', 'choir', 'class', and 'police' will usually take a singular verb. The exception is when we talk about the various members that make up the collective noun. If that is the case the subject will be plural.

The **police** has apprehended the culprit. (We are talking about the police as an organisation, not the individual police officers).

The **board** *are* in disagreement about the decision. (The members of the board disagree with each other).

Rule-11

If the subject is a noun or a pronoun like 'half', 'none', 'some', 'more', or 'all' followed by a prepositional phrase, then the object of the prepositional phrase determines the form of the verb. This is also the case with fractions and percentages.

All of the apple *is* eaten.

All of the apples *are* eaten.

Fifty percent of the job *is* routine.

Rule-12

If the subject describes units of measurement or units of time, the verb will usually be singular.

Three quarters of the tank *is* filled.

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Fifty dollars *is* too much to lose.

Rule-13

And finally, the verb is singular if the subject is an indefinite pronoun that ends in *-body*, *-one* or *-thing*. For example: *anybody*, *anyone*, *anything*, *everybody*, *everyone*, *everything*, *nobody*, *no one*, *one*, *somebody*, *someone*.

Everyone *has* arrived.

Nobody *is* right all the time.

Sample Questions with Answers

Exercise-1

Identify the correct verb form (singular or plural) to match the subject in each sentence.

1. The sunflowers in the garden ____ (is/are) blooming beautifully.
2. Neither the cat nor the dogs ____ (seems/seem) interested in the new toy.
3. The committee ____ (has/have) reached a decision.
4. My collection of stamps and coins ____ (was/were) stolen.
5. Every student in the class ____ (has/have) completed the assignment.
6. The news about the accident ____ (is/are) disturbing.
7. Both the pen and the pencil ____ (needs/need) to be replaced.
8. The majority of the books on the shelf ____ (is/are) science fiction.
9. Neither of the options ____ (appeals/appeal) to me.
10. The team, as well as the coach, ____ (is/are) attending the awards ceremony.

Answers:

1. The sunflowers in the garden **are** blooming beautifully.
2. Neither the cat nor the dogs **seem** interested in the new toy.
3. The committee **has** reached a decision.
4. My collection of stamps and coins **was** stolen.
5. Every student in the class **has** completed the assignment.

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6. The news about the accident **is** disturbing.
7. Both the pen and the pencil **need** to be replaced.
8. The majority of the books on the shelf **are** science fiction.
9. Neither of the options **appeals** to me.
10. The team, as well as the coach, **is** attending the awards ceremony.

Exercise-2

1. A group of students ____ (is/are) planning a charity event.
2. The book, as well as the accompanying CD, ____ (was/were) missing.
3. All the furniture in the room ____ (needs/need) to be rearranged.
4. Neither the cookies nor the cake ____ (is/are) on the dessert table.
5. The information on the website ____ (is/are) accurate.
6. Each of the candidates ____ (has/have) submitted a resume.
7. The price of these jeans ____ (has/have) increased.
8. My favorite type of music ____ (is/are) classical.
9. The dog and the cat ____ (gets/get) along well.
10. Either the orange or the apples ____ (tastes/taste) delicious.

Answers:

1. A group of students **is** planning a charity event.
2. The book, as well as the accompanying CD, **was** missing.
3. All the furniture in the room **needs** to be rearranged.
4. Neither the cookies nor the cake **is** on the dessert table.
5. The information on the website **is** accurate.
6. Each of the candidates **has** submitted a resume.
7. The price of these jeans **has** increased.
8. My favorite type of music **is** classical.
9. The dog and the cat **get** along well.
10. Either the orange or the apples **taste** delicious.

Exercise to work

1. The herd of elephants ____ (is/are) crossing the river.
2. Both the teacher and the students ____ (was/were) surprised by the test results.
3. One of the girls ____ (has/have) volunteered to lead the project.

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4. The collection of rare coins ____ (was/were) displayed in the museum.
5. Many of the workers ____ (is/are) requesting a raise.
6. The sound of footsteps in the hallway ____ (is/are) making me nervous.
7. Each of the paintings in the gallery ____ (has/have) a unique story.
8. The majority of the audience ____ (was/were) impressed by the performance.
9. Neither the flowers nor the vase ____ (needs/need) to be replaced.
10. The team, along with their coach, ____ (is/are) traveling to the championship.
11. The pack of wolves ____ (is/are) howling in the distance.
12. Each of the cars in the parking lot ____ (has/have) a flat tire.
13. Neither the students nor the teacher ____ (was/were) aware of the change in schedule.
14. The pile of documents on the desk ____ (needs/need) to be sorted.
15. All the information in the report ____ (is/are) accurate.
16. Some of the cake on the plate ____ (has/have) already been eaten.
17. The committee ____ (has/have) submitted their final recommendations.
18. Neither the cat nor the dogs ____ (seems/seem) interested in the new toy.
19. Both the pen and the pencil ____ (is/are) on the desk.
20. The group of friends ____ (was/were) planning a weekend getaway.
21. A variety of issues ____ (has/have) been discussed in the meeting.
22. The audience, along with the performers, ____ (was/were) waiting for the show to begin.
23. Not only the students but also the professor ____ (is/are) attending the conference.
24. The team of scientists ____ (has/have) conducted extensive research on the subject.
25. Ten dollars ____ (is/are) too much to pay for that sandwich.
26. The number of visitors to the museum ____ (has/have) increased significantly.
27. Either the parents or the teacher ____ (is/are) responsible for the child's behavior.
28. The data collected from the survey ____ (indicates/indicate) a clear trend.
29. The group of musicians ____ (was/were) rehearsing for hours before the concert.
30. Fifty percent of the population ____ (is/are) in favor of the new policy.

