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The **subject** and **verb**of each clause or sentence must agree in number. A singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb. To proofread for subject-verb agreement, circle the subject and verb in each sentence and be sure they agree.

**BOLO! Be on the lookout for subject-verb agreement errors in these situations:**

1. **When other words come between subject and verb**. The subject and verb must agree even when other words, phrases, and clauses come between them. Don’t assume that the noun closest to the verb is the subject.

Tip: To find the true subject of the verb, put parentheses around any phrase or clause that comes between the subject and verb:

The **funds** (generated by our annual bake sale) ***are*** not high enough.

**One** (of the children in the bumper cars) **is** crying.

The **dog** (that stole the bones) **is** over there.

The girl, (together with two of her classmates), was awarded a trophy for her science project.

2. **When the subject is a compound subject**. Two or more subjects joined by *and* take a plural verb.

My **brother** and his **friend *commute*** every day from Covington.

Tip: Expressions including *as well as, together with, along with, in addition to, including,* and *no less than* do not make a singular subject into a plural.

The **mayo**r *and* **his** **brothers *are*** going to prison.

The **mayor,** *as well as* his brothers, ***is*** going to prison.

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

Either **John** or his **brother** ***is*** the culprit.

When the compound subject is made up of both singular and plural subjects, the verb agrees with the subject nearest the verb.

**Either John** or his **brothers *are*** the culprits.

3. **When the subject is an indefinite pronoun.** Indefinite pronouns are singular and take a singular verb.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| -one words | -body words | -thing words | other |
| one | nobody | nothing | each |
| anyone | anybody | anything | every |
| everyone | everybody | everything | either |
| someone | somebody | something | neither |

**Everybody** in the class ***has done*** the homework well in advance.

*Each* is often followed by a prepositional phrase ending in a plural word, but the verb is still singular.

**Each** of the students ***is***responsible for doing **his or her** work in the library.

A few indefinite pronouns (*all, any, none, most, some*) may be singular or plural depending on the noun or pronoun they refer to.

***Some*** of the rice ***is*** on the table. ***All*** of the books ***are*** on the floor. ***None*** of the liquor ***remains***. ***None*** of the cupcakes ***were*** eaten. ***Is any*** of the pie left? ***Are any*** of the eggs broken? ***Most*** of the eggs ***are*** broken, but ***most*** of the sausage ***is*** still edible.

4. When the subject is a group or collective noun.

When the subject is a word such as *committee, audience,* or *jury*, the number of the verb depends on whether the subject is treated as a unit or as a group of individuals:

The **jury *delivers*** its verdict at noon. (The members of the jury are acting as a single unit.)

The **jury *take*** their seats in the courtroom. (The members enter and seat themselves as individuals.)

When the subject is a word such as *mathematics* or *measles*, you may be tempted to use a plural verb, but these words are singular and take a singular verb.

**Measles *has become*** less common in the United States.

5. **When the sentence contains a relative clause** (a subordinate clause starting with a relative pronoun *that, who,* or *which*), make the verb in the relative clause agree with the noun or pronoun to which the relative pronoun refers.

He prefers ***foods that provide*** lots of protein. (foods . . . provide)

When the sentence contains the subject complement *one of those . . . who*, use a plural verb.

Rose is one of the **students** ***who score*** perfectly on quizzes. (students . . . score)

When the sentence contains the subject complement *only one of those . . . who*, use a singular verb.

Rose is the ***only one******of the students who scores*** perfectly on quizzes. (only one . . . scores)

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