



SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

Subject Verb Agreement

In a sentence, the subject and the verb must agree. This means that if the subject is singular, the verb cannot be plural and vice versa. This is known as the subject verb agreement. Let us take a look.

The Subject Verb Agreement

Generally, there are two types of verbs in a sentence- finite and non-finite. Finite verbs are also known as the main verbs in the sentence. These directly relate to the subject of the sentence in terms of tense and number. All the other verbs in the sentence are non-finite verbs. Thus the non-finite verbs are mostly not in sync with the subject of the verb.

The subject-verb agreement states that the finite or the main verb of the sentence must agree with its subject in person as well as in number. For example,

- **Incorrect-** We is studying English grammar on Toppr.
- **Correct-** We are studying English grammar on Toppr.

Note that the agreement is in terms of person and number.

Agreement in Person

The general cases that arise and the rules concerned are discussed as below:

I. When the sentence has different persons (irrespective of a noun or a pronoun), separated by an 'and', we should use the plural verb. For example:

- Jake and Misha are siblings.
- You, Pete and I are going to the woods.

II. In subject verb agreement when there are different persons in the subject of the sentence, separated by an 'or' or 'nor', the verb agrees in person with the word nearest to it. For example:

- Neither she nor you are at fault.
- Either David or I am going to the party.
- Either Mich or he is at fault.

III. 'Let us' always takes a verb as the subject. For example:



- Let us go out.
- Let them sing the song.

IV. Kings and editors use ‘we’ for ‘I’ in their sentences and the verb agrees with this. For example:

- We are going to publish this.
- We work for the welfare of people.

V. The words ‘Your Honour’, ‘Your Majesty’ etc. take a singular verb. For example:

- If Your Majesty wants.....

VI. When in a sentence two different words are joined by ‘as well as’, the verb agrees with the first word. That is:

- Dave, as well as I, is coming.
- The students, as well as the teachers, were asked to vacate the room.

VII. If two words in the sentence are joined by ‘not only’’but also’, subject verb agreement states that the verb agrees with the word nearest to it. For example:

- Not only you, but also the teachers are also in opposition to this.
- Not only we, but also our parents want us to win.

Agreement in Number

The general cases and the concerned rules are as follows:

I. When the subject is a collective noun, we use a singular verb if we view noun as a whole and a plural verb if we view the noun as a collection of individuals. For example:

- The herd is moving towards the farm.
- A number of the members of the team were absent.

II. The verb of the sentence should essentially agree with the subject of the sentence in number. For example:

- He is playing well.
- We are going for a vacation.

III. When there are two or more nouns separated by an ‘and’, we use a plural form of the verb. For example:



- Misha and Rita are best friends.
- Jack, Dale, and Morty are very naughty.

IV. The nouns that are separated by an ‘and’ but refer to the same person take a singular verb. For example:

- The actor and director is in the office.
- The great poet and writer has died.

Note: If the nouns were referring to different persons, they would have different articles. That is:

- The actor and the director are in the office.

V. When nouns joined by ‘and’ talk about a single collective idea, we use the singular verb. For example:

- Bread and butter is a routine breakfast here.

VI. When the subject comes after ‘each’ or ‘every’, a singular verb is used. For example:

- Each student is working very hard.
- Every man is a culprit.

VII. When the subject is preceded by ‘each of’, ‘one of’, ‘either of’ or ‘neither of’, we use a singular verb according to the subject verb agreement. For example:

- Each of the students is writing an essay.
- Neither of us is leaving today.

VIII. Singular nouns joined by ‘or’, ‘nor’, ‘either’ or ‘neither’, take a singular verb. For example:

- Neither you nor I am at fault.
- Either Vrinu or Kasha is lying.

IX. The relative pronouns- who, which- followed by a verb that agrees with its antecedent in number and person. For example:

- It is I who am to blame.
- Ram is one of the boys who are noble.

X. The nouns joined by- with, along with and no less than and not- have a verb that agrees with the first noun in number. For example:



- He no less than you is at fault.
- I and not you, am to blame.

XI. Summons, means and innings- look plural but generally take singular verbs. For example:

- The summons of the court was served on him.
- This is only a means to achieve the end.
- The first innings is over.

X. Some nouns appear plural but take a singular verb. For example:

- Physics is really intriguing.
- The news is wrong.

This is because these nouns are talking about a single idea. That is, in the first sentence we are talking about the whole discipline of physics as one.

XI. Countries that have plural names take a singular verb. Again this is because the country is a single entity, considered as a whole. For example:

- The United States of America is spearheading the world.

X. Plural nouns making one quantity take singular verbs. For example:

- 10 dollars is the right price.
- Three kilometres is the exact distance.

1. One of my friends **has** gone to France.
2. Each of the boys **was** given a present.
3. Neither of the contestants **was** able to win a decisive victory.
4. Oil and water **do** not mix.
5. He and I **were** at Oxford together.
6. Slow and steady **wins** the race.
7. Neither Peter nor James **has** any right to the property.



8. No prize or medal **was** given to the boy, though he stood first in the examination.
9. Either Mary or Alice **is** responsible for this.
10. Neither the Minister nor his colleagues **have** given an explanation for this.

1. For each of the following, choose the sentence in which the subject and verb agree.

☐ A) Every one of the shirts has a green collar.

☐ B) Every one of the shirts have a green collar.

2.

☐ A) This singer, along with a few others, play the harmonica on stage.

☐ B) This singer, along with a few others, plays the harmonica on stage.

3.

☐ A) Sandals and towels are essential gear for a trip to the beach.

☐ B) Sandals and towels is essential gear for a trip to the beach.

4.

☐ A) The president or the vice president are speaking today.

☐ B) The president or the vice president is speaking today.

5.



☐ A) Either Cassie or Marie pays the employees this afternoon.

☐ B) Either Cassie or Marie pay the employees this afternoon.

6.

☐ A) Either the sculpture or the paintings are in the museum today.

☐ B) Either the sculpture or the paintings is in the museum today.

7.

☐ A) The coat or the hats are in that closet.

☐ B) The coat or the hats is in that closet.

8.

☐ A) Neither she nor I is getting the lunch special.

☐ B) Neither she nor I am getting the lunch special.

☐ C) Neither she nor I are getting the lunch special.

9.

☐ A) Each of the dancers twirls brilliantly.

☐ B) Each of the dancers twirl brilliantly.



10.

- ☐ A) Mustard greens are my favorite vegetable.
- ☐ B) Mustard greens is my favorite vegetable.

ANSWERS:

1. For each of the following, choose the sentence in which the subject and verb agree.

Correct Answer: A Every one of the shirts has a green collar.

Explanation: The pronoun *one* is singular and requires singular verbs. Do not be misled by the object of the preposition.

Your Answer: Not Answered

2.

Correct Answer: B This singer, along with a few others, plays the harmonica on stage.

Explanation: Sometimes the subject is separated from the verb by words such as *along with*, *as well as*, *besides*, or *not*. Ignore these expressions when determining whether to use a singular or plural verb.

Your Answer: Not Answered

3.

Correct Answer: A Sandals and towels are essential gear for a trip to the beach.

Explanation: two subjects connected by *and* require a plural verb.

Your Answer: Not Answered

4.



Correct Answer: B The president or the vice president is speaking today.

Explanation: two singular subjects connected by *or* require a singular verb.

Your Answer: Not Answered

5.

Correct Answer: A Either Cassie or Marie pays the employees this afternoon.

Explanation: two singular subjects connected by *or*, *either/or*, or *neither/nor* require a singular verb.

Your Answer: Not Answered

6.

Correct Answer: A Either the sculpture or the paintings are in the museum today.

Explanation: when a singular and plural subject are connected by *or*, *either/or*, or *neither/nor*, the verb agrees with the subject closer to it.

Your Answer: Not Answered

7.

Correct Answer: A The coat or the hats are in that closet.

Explanation: see Explanation 6.

Your Answer: Not Answered

8.

Correct Answer: B Neither she nor I am getting the lunch special.

Explanation: see Explanation 6. In this case, the verb must agree with the subject pronoun "I."

Your Answer: Not Answered

9.



Correct Answer: A Each of the dancers twirls brilliantly.

Explanation: The pronoun *each* is singular and requires singular verbs. Do not be misled by the object of the preposition.

Your Answer: Not Answered

10.

Correct Answer: A Mustard greens are my favorite vegetable.

Explanation: the subject, "Mustard greens," is plural and requires the plural verb "are."

Your Answer: Not Answered