

Subject-Verb Concord

You already know what ‘subject’ and ‘verb’ are in a sentence. ‘Subject’ is a noun or **pronoun** that tells us what the sentence talks about and ‘verb’ represents the action in the sentence. Then what is ‘subject verb concord/agreement’? It means that the subject and verb in a sentence should agree or match, otherwise the sentence will not sound right. Let’s understand the basic rules of **subject-verb agreement**.

Rule 1

The verb and subject must agree in number (singular or plural)

This means that if the subject is singular, the verb should be singular and if the subject is plural, the verb should also be plural.

Examples:

1. He **plays** football. , He **has** many friends. (SINGULAR)
2. They **play** football. , They **have** difficult questions (PLURAL)

Rule 2

The number of the subject (singular or plural) will not change due to words/phrases in between the subject and the verb.

Examples:

1. One of the glasses **is** empty. (Here, since the subject is ‘one’, the verb should be ‘is’).
2. The bouquet of red roses **smells** so sweet. (Here, since ‘bouquet’ is the subject and not ‘roses’, the verb should be ‘smells’ and not ‘smell’)

Rule 3

Subjects that are joined by ‘and’ in a sentence, use a plural verb. Subjects that are joined by ‘either/or’, ‘neither/nor’ use a singular verb.

Examples:

1. Radha and Meera are coming home.
2. Neither Akshay nor Rohit is coming home.
3. My dad or my mom is arriving today.

Rule 4

The verb in a sentence containing ‘or’, ‘either/or’, ‘neither/nor’ agrees with the noun or pronoun closest to it.

Examples:

1. Neither the shoes nor the bag matches the dress. (Here, ‘bag’ is closest to the verb, hence ‘matches’)
2. Neither the bag nor the shoes match the dress. (Here, ‘shoes’ is closest to the verb, hence ‘match’)

Rule 5

When the subject is followed by words such as ‘as well as’, ‘along with’, ‘besides’, ‘not’ etc. ignore them and use a singular verb if the subject is singular.

Expressions such as *coupled with*, *as well as*, *along with*, *together with*, *not to mention*, and others do not act as coordinating conjunctions. Therefore, when you use these expressions to join one *singular* subject of a sentence with another noun or pronoun, you do not form a plural subject.

Examples:

1. Matt, **as well as** his dog, **is** expected shortly.
2. Patrik, **along with** his brother, **is** going to school.

Rule 6

In sentences that begin with ‘here’, ‘there’, the true subject usually follows the verb.

Examples:

1. Here **are the chocolates**.
2. There **is** a big **puddle** on the road.

Rule 7

In sentences that include sums of money, periods of time or distances etc. (as a unit), use singular verbs. Expressions of time, money and distance usually take a singular verb: Ten dollars is a great deal of money to a child.
Examples: Ten kilometres is too far to walk. Six weeks is not long enough.

1. 500 rupees **is** a high price to pay.
2. 62 years **is** the minimum age of retirement.
3. 10 kilometers **is** too far to walk.

Rule 8

In the case of words such as ‘a lot of’, ‘all’, ‘some’ etc. in a sentence, pay attention to the noun after ‘of’. If the noun after ‘of’ is singular then use a singular verb, if plural, use a plural verb.

Examples:

- 1-All of the cake **is** gone.
- 2-All of the cakes **are** gone.
- 3-A lot of the cake **is** gone.

4-A lot of the cakes **are** gone.

5-Some of the cake **is** gone.

6-Some of the cakes **are** gone.

Rule 9

In the case of collective nouns such as ‘group, ‘population’, ‘family’, in a sentence, the verb can be singular or plural depending on their use in the sentence.

Examples:

1. Most of my family **is** here OR **are** here.
2. Half of the population **was** against the bill OR **were** against the bill.

Rule 10

Nouns such as ‘mathematics’, ‘civics’, ‘news’ etc. while plural in form, are singular in meaning and use singular verbs.

Examples:

1. Mathematics **is** very difficult for some people.
2. The news **is** very saddening.

Rule 11

In sentences that express a wish, request or contrary to fact, the word ‘were’ is used instead of ‘was.

Examples:

1. I **wish** my sister **were** here.

2. Aditya requested that she raise her glass.

Question: Choose the correct subject verb combinations in the sentences below.

- a. The lady in the car (look/looks) like your mother.
- b. Most of the milk (is/are) gone.
- c. One of the flowers (has/have) wilted.
- d. Either Ram or Shyam (is/are) coming today.
- e. Here (is/are) the newspaper.
- f. The group of dancers (is/are) here.
- g. Civics (is/are) my favorite subject.

ACTIVITY 4 Finding Subject-Verb Errors

Read the sentences. Find the 12 mistakes and correct them. If the sentence is correct, write C on the line.

1. _____ Everybody lives near the coast because the interior is too dry.
2. _____ A pair of scissors are necessary for this project.
3. _____ Laura carry her guitar from class to class every Thursday.
4. _____ The main method of transportation in all of those tropical islands are the public bus system.
5. _____ The trees behind my house is dense.
6. _____ Earth revolve around the Sun.
7. _____ A pilot and a co-pilot flies the plane.
8. _____ The baby elephants at the zoo weighs just under 300 pounds.
9. _____ The coffee cups in the sink is still dirty.
10. _____ Professor Jones teaches Latin at 9 A.M. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
11. _____ Most people in my town has a car.
12. _____ My family live near the ocean.
13. _____ There are many interesting things to do in San Francisco.
14. _____ Every term the students tries new activities.

ACTIVITY 5 Practicing Subject-Verb Agreement

Underline the correct verb form in each sentence.

1. One reason I want to visit Asia (is, are) to see Japan.
2. In my opinion, the best tourist destinations in Japan (is, are) Tokyo and Kyoto.
3. Tokyo (is, are) a very modern city with many tall buildings.
4. In fact, the skyscrapers in Tokyo (is, are) some of the tallest buildings in the world.
5. However, the city skyline with these incredibly tall buildings (do, does) not look like the scenery in Kyoto at all.
6. Life in Kyoto (move, moves) at a much slower pace.
7. Kyoto (is, are) not only smaller but also much older.
8. In fact, Kyoto (was, were) the capital of Japan a long time ago.
9. Many of the traditional buildings still (exist, exists) there, so tourists can see them all over.
10. Life in these two places (is, are) quite different, and tourists (visit, visits) each city for very different reasons.