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# Subject-Verb Agreement B

**8b.** A verb should agree in number with its subject.

- (1) Singular subjects take singular verbs.
- (2) Plural subjects take plural verbs.

When a sentence contains a verb phrase, the first helping verb in the verb phrase agrees with the subject.

**EXAMPLES** Our favorite **sport is** soccer. [The singular verb *is* agrees with the singular subject *sport*.]  
**We have been playing** soccer in the park. [The plural helping verb *have* agrees with the plural subject *We*.]

**EXERCISE A** In each of the following sentences, underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with its subject.

**Example 1.** Soccer (is, are) the world's most popular team sport.

1. Our cat (like, likes) to watch television with us, especially the nature shows.
2. All the students (enjoy, enjoys) the reading assignment every week.
3. Before he became a lawyer, my uncle Nacio (was, were) a high-wire performer in the circus.
4. This music (has, have) elements of harmony that are very complex.
5. (Is, Are) Rafael usually first in line for every new movie in town?
6. As the final plot twist is revealed, the reader (start, starts) to understand why the butler left the French doors open.
7. My mother (prefer, prefers) a good book to a good movie.
8. Many passersby (are, is) curious about the mysterious building being constructed downtown.
9. Before they leave for vacation, the women (ask, asks) their neighbors to look after their house.
10. The grass (is, are) always greener after a good rain.

**EXERCISE B** In each of the following sentences, underline the helping verb in parentheses that agrees with its subject.

**Example 1.** Jacob (has, have) been exploring a salt marsh.

11. Over the past year, Jonelle (has, have) been collecting articles about Olympic gymnasts.
12. I read that the English actor Ralph Fiennes (is, are) appearing in *Hamlet* this season in London.
13. (Do, Does) she know yet about the letter from her brother?
14. They (has, have) been thinking about adopting a dog for some time now.
15. Certainly Mr. Iwaye (do, does) understand the importance of meeting the deadline.

## Subject-Verb Agreement C

**8c.** 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.

**EXERCISE A** In each of the following sentences, underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with its subject.

**Example 1.** The book in which I found these facts and figures (belongs, belong) to Ms. Najera.

- The last people off the ship (carry, carries) their own luggage.
- This anthology of short stories (include, includes) at least one story by Charles Baxter.
- Songs about love often (make, makes) me cry.
- Jim's brother, who is an art director for television sitcoms in Hollywood, (is, are) a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- The demolition of a skyscraper always (draw, draws) a crowd.
- At the end of the story, the king of the birds (declare, declares), "I grant the eagle's request!"
- The solution to all of our problems (is, are) to start the project over again from scratch.
- The potatoes from the garden (was, were) peeled before they were put into the pot.
- Two types of salad (was, were) served first.
- The sound of the passing ships (echo, echoes) through the fog.

**EXERCISE B** In each of the following sentences, circle the subject of the verb in parentheses. Then, underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

**Example 1.** My favorite book of short stories (is, are) *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* by Edgar Allan Poe.

- The students in my karate class (watch, watches) carefully whenever the instructor demonstrates a move.
- The jar of lima beans (was, were) stored in the coolest section of the cellar.
- The birthday cards that I received this year (is, are) mostly from out of town.
- The two men who both work the third shift at the police department, (sleep, sleeps) during the day.
- The judges on the panel (decide, decides) which skaters will continue to the semifinals.

# Subject-Verb Agreement D

**8d.** The following indefinite pronouns are singular: *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, nothing, no one, one, somebody, someone, and something.*

**EXAMPLE** **Everyone** is responsible for bringing his or her own lunch.

**8e.** The following indefinite pronouns are plural: *both, few, many, and several.*

**EXAMPLE** **Both** of the girls **excel** at basketball.

**8f.** The indefinite pronouns *all, any, more, most, none, and some* may be singular or plural, depending on their meaning in a sentence.

Often, 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. If the object is plural, the pronoun is plural.

**EXAMPLES** **Some** of the carrots **have** been sliced. [*Some* refers to the plural object *carrots*.]  
**Some** of the salad **is** in the refrigerator. [*Some* refers to the singular object *salad*.]

**EXERCISE** Circle the indefinite pronoun in each of the following sentences. Then, underline the correct form of the verb in parentheses.

**Example 1.** Most of the cups (was, were) unbroken after the earthquake.

- Something about the candidate's answers (has, have) been bothering me ever since the debate.
- Both of the dogs (has, have) already been treated for heartworm.
- All of the stuff in the attic (need, needs) to be dusted before the yard sale.
- Neither of the movies (is, are) very good.
- (Have, Has) not several of these dogs already won awards?
- Everybody who is registered for the class (read, reads) the same books.
- No one in the play (was, were) prepared for the overwhelming response of the audience on opening night.
- (Is, Are) any of the dough ready to be baked?
- The director is pleased that more of the singers (have, has) memorized the score for this rehearsal than for the last rehearsal.
- Somebody among the reporters covering the trial (is, are) getting inside information from the district attorney.

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## Subject-Verb Agreement F

**8g.** Subjects joined by *and* usually take a plural verb.

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

**EXAMPLES** **Franco and I** look for a book about the life of George Washington Carver.

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

**8h.** Singular subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a singular verb. Plural subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a plural verb.

**EXAMPLES** Neither **poverty** nor any other **hardship** **was** too great an obstacle for Carver.

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

**8i.** When a singular subject and a plural subject are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject nearer the verb.

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

**EXERCISE** Circle the subjects of the verb in parentheses in each of the following sentences. Then, underline the correct form of the verb in parentheses.

**Example 1.** Plants, flowers and soil (was, were) interesting to Carver.

- Plants and flowers (is, are) featured on the cover of this book about Carver's life.
- The author and illustrator of the book (is, are) the same person.
- According to the book, grief and sorrow (was, were) part of Carver's early life.
- Neither his mother nor his father (was, were) alive to raise Carver.
- At the time, slaveholding and slave trading (was, were) widespread.
- Neither Carver nor many other African Americans (was, were) able to find a college that would enroll them.
- Neither the large universities nor the local college (was, were) accepting applications from African Americans.
- Just laws and the strict enforcement of them (was, were) needed.
- Also described in the book (is, are) Carver's experiments and discoveries.
- An innovative educator and scientist (was, were) George Washington Carver.