

## Agreement of Subject and Verb

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

A subject and verb agree when they have the same number. When a word names one person, place, thing, or idea, it is *singular* in number. When a word names more than one person, place, thing, or idea, it is *plural* in number.

### Singular Verbs

(1) Singular subjects take singular verbs.

Most verbs that end in *-s*, such as *goes* and *begins*, are singular.

**EXAMPLES** The **bicycle** **handles** the bumpy road well. [The singular verb *handles*

**S**  
**V**

agrees with the singular subject *bicycle*.]

**V**  
**S**

Is the **singer** ready for the concert? [The singular verb *Is* agrees with the singular subject *singer*.]

**NOTE** Verbs used with the singular pronouns *I* and *you* do not end in *-s*.

**EXAMPLE** I **say** a word of encouragement whenever I can. [The singular verb *say*, which does not end in *-s*, agrees with the singular pronoun *I*.]

**EXERCISE A** Underline the verb form that agrees with the subject in each of the following sentences.

**Example 1.** On Saturday, I usually (go, *goes*) to a movie with friends. [The singular verb *go* agrees

with the singular subject *I*.]

- Sometimes a comedy (*catch*, *catches*) our eyes. [Is the subject singular or plural?]
- (*Is*, *Are*) a matinee cheaper than an evening show?
- Jack usually (*say*, *says*) he would prefer to see a science fiction movie.
- This time, Sarah (*remind*, *reminds*) us that it is her turn to choose the movie.
- She (*suggest*, *suggests*) an adventure movie, and we all agree.

### Plural Verbs

(2) Plural subjects take plural verbs.

**S**  
**V**

**EXAMPLES** **Lizards** **bask** on sun-warmed stones. [The plural verb *bask* agrees with the

plural subject *Lizards*.]

**V**  
**S**

Are the **Hendersons** at the movie theater? [The plural verb *Are* agrees with the plural subject *Hendersons*.]

**EXERCISE B** Underline the verb form that agrees with the subject in each of the following sentences.

- Example 1.** My friends, Alex and Marco, (share, shares) the same birthday. [The plural verb *share* agrees with the plural subject *friends*.]
- Their parents *(has, have)* a lot of fun things planned for the party. [Is the subject singular or plural?]
  - All of us *(hopes, hope)* to celebrate their birthday tonight.
  - Some guests *(plans, plan)* to bring food and drinks.
  - Others *(prefers, prefer)* to bring decorations.
  - We *(knows, know)* that Alex and Marco will be very happy.

### Agreement with Helping Verbs

A verb phrase is made up of a main verb and one or more helping verbs. The first helping verb in the verb phrase agrees with the subject.

- EXAMPLES** The **bread has risen** for twenty minutes. [*Has risen* is the verb phrase. The singular helping verb *has* agrees with the singular noun *bread*.]
- S                    V
- Yes, the **twins do take** piano lessons weekly. [*Do take* is the verb phrase. The plural helping verb *do* agrees with the plural subject *twins*.]

**REMEMBER** Even when the helping verb comes before the subject, as in a question, it agrees with the subject.

- EXAMPLE** **Has the concert ended yet?** [*Has ended* is the verb phrase. The singular helping verb *Has* agrees with the singular subject *concert*.]

**EXERCISE C** Underline the helping verb that agrees with the subject in each of the following sentences.

- Example 1.** (Is, Are) the word *millennium* spelled with two *l*'s and two *n*'s? [The singular helping verb *Is* agrees with the singular subject *word*.]
- How long *(does, do)* a nanosecond last? [Is the subject singular or plural?]
  - We *(has, have)* read that it lasts one billionth of a second.
  - (Does, Do)* the states of Montana and Idaho have many mountains?
  - This cool weather *(has, have)* energized me!
  - Kira *(has, have)* trained for the track meet all semester long.

## Subject-Verb Agreement: Compound Subjects

As you may remember, a subject tells who or what a sentence is about. Sometimes, two (or more) subjects form a *compound subject*.

S S S V

**COMPOUND SUBJECT** Tracy, Susan, and Lee play on the basketball team. [Tracy, Susan, and Lee form a compound subject because all three people play.]

### Subjects Joined by *And*

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

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**EXAMPLE** Have Emma and Claire thought about their social studies project? [Emma and Claire are joined by *and* and form the compound subject. The verb is *Have thought*. The plural helping verb *Have* agrees with the compound subject.]

Sometimes, a compound subject names only one person or thing. In such a case the compound subject takes a singular verb.

S V

**EXAMPLE** My closest friend and most trusted advisor is Megan. [Friend and advisor are the same person, Megan. In this case, the compound subject is singular, and the singular verb *is* agrees with it.]

**EXERCISE A** Circle the verb in parentheses that agrees with the compound subject in each of the following sentences. Each compound subject has been underlined for you.

**Example 1.** Carla and her friend (*prefers*, *prefer*) algebra to geometry. [The subjects Carla and

*friend* are joined by *and* and form the compound subject. The plural verb *prefer* agrees with the compound subject.]

1. Squids and cuttlefish (*has*, *have*) eight arms. [Which is the plural verb?]
2. Dragons and unicorns (*is*, *are*) mythical creatures.
3. (*Does*, *Do*) the problems and their answers make sense to you now?
4. The singer and songwriter of that song (*was*, *were*) my friend Matthew.
5. On the weekend, Sandy and her sister often (*watches*, *watch*) old, black and white movies.

### Subjects Joined by *Or* or *Nor*

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

S S V

**EXAMPLES** Either the ceiling fan or an open window keeps the room cool. [The singular verb *keeps* agrees with the singular subject *ceiling fan* and the singular subject *window*.]



## Agreement with Indefinite Pronouns

A pronoun that does not refer to a specific person, place, thing, or idea is called an *indefinite pronoun*. When an indefinite pronoun is used as a subject, make sure the verb agrees with the pronoun.

### Singular Indefinite Pronouns

- 8d.** The following indefinite pronouns are singular:

anybody	either	neither	one
anyone	everybody	nobody	somebody
anything	everyone	no one	someone
each	everything	nothing	something

Use a singular verb to agree with each of these indefinite pronouns.

**EXAMPLES** **Everybody needs** vaccinations against polio. [The singular verb *needs* agrees with the singular subject *Everybody*.]

**Each of the children cries** a little over the shot. [The singular verb *cries* agrees with the singular subject *Each*.]

**EXERCISE A** Circle the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject in each of the following sentences. Each subject has been underlined for you.

**Example 1.** Somebody (has, have) to turn out the lights! [The indefinite pronoun *Somebody* is always singular. The singular verb *has* agrees with the subject.]

- Each of the girls (keeps, keep) her own garden. [Which verb agrees with the singular indefinite pronoun *Each*?]
- Nothing (prevents, prevent) us from trying your plan.
- Neither of the plums (is, are) ripe yet.
- (Has, Have) anything been happening while we were away?
- Either of these books (looks, look) interesting to read.

### Plural Indefinite Pronouns

- 8e.** The following indefinite pronouns are plural:

both	few	many	several
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Use a plural verb to agree with each of these pronouns.

**EXAMPLE** **Several** of the nurses **are comforting** the children. [The plural verb *are comforting* agrees with the plural subject *Several*.]

**EXERCISE B** Circle the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject in each of the following sentences. Each subject has been underlined for you.

**Example 1.** Few of the seats (*has, ~~have~~*) been taken. [The indefinite pronoun *Few* is always plural.]

The plural verb *have* agrees with the subject.]

6. Both of my grandfathers (*enjoys, enjoy*) a good game of golf. [Which verb agrees with the plural indefinite pronoun *Both*?
7. Several of the gymnasts (*does, do*) well on the balance beam.
8. (*Does, Do*) many of the children need a ride to the museum?
9. A few of Rob's shirts (*is, are*) at the dry cleaner's.
10. Several (*has, have*) finished their assignments already.

### Singular or Plural Indefinite Pronouns

- 8f.** These indefinite pronouns may be singular or plural, depending on how they are used in a sentence:

all	any	more	most	none	some
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**TIP** Look at the phrase following the indefinite pronoun. If the noun in that phrase is singular, the pronoun is singular, too. If the noun in that phrase is plural, the pronoun is plural, too.

**EXAMPLES** **Some** of the **medicine** **has expired**. [The subject *Some* is singular because it refers to the singular noun *medicine*. The singular verb *has expired* agrees with the subject *Some*.]

**Some** of the **leases** **have expired**. [The subject *Some* is plural because it refers to the plural noun *leases*. The plural verb *have expired* agrees with the subject *Some*.]

**EXERCISE C** Underline the subject in each of the following sentences. Then, circle the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

**Example 1.** All of the ducklings (*is, ~~are~~*) getting their feathers. [The subject is *All*. The plural noun *ducklings* follows the subject. The plural verb *are* agrees with the plural subject.]

11. Most of my friends (*starts, start*) their day with a toothbrush and toothpaste. [What is the subject? Is the noun in the phrase that follows it singular or plural?]
12. Some of my sandwich (*has, have*) fallen onto the floor.
13. (*Doesn't, Don't*) all of the students enjoy their lunch?
14. More of the salad (*has, have*) been eaten.
15. All of the men in my family (*shaves, shave*) regularly.