

Subject-Verb Agreement Rules PDF



By **Muhammad Faisal Kiani**

Students' & Teachers' Trainer and Counselor

[ECTI Pakistan](http://www.ectipakistan.com)

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Subject-Verb Agreement Rules and Principles

1. The Number Agreement
2. Words Between Subject and Verb
3. "Here" or "There"
4. Subject After Verb in Questions
5. Joined by "and."
6. Two Subjects Separated by "and"

7. "Each", "Every" and "No"
8. Singular Subjects that End in "S"
9. Multiple Subjects Connected With Conjunction
10. Singular and Plural Subjects Connected by Conjunction
11. Units of Measurement or Time
12. The object of the Preposition
13. Accompanying Expressions
14. Infinite Pronouns
15. Singular Subjects that Sound Plural
16. Gerunds
17. Collective Nouns
18. Titles of Books

Rule 1.

The Number Agreement

Verb and subject must agree in number. It is the fundamental rule that supports the basic concept. However, only the subject affects verbs! There is nothing else to consider.

Examples:

1. The cat loves balls.
2. Cats love balls.
3. The dog runs when he is healthy.
4. Dogs run when they are healthy.

Did you notice that we used **'s'** with the verb **'run'** for the third-person singular subject **'the dog'** in the third sentence? Yes, you are right! The present indefinite tense requires an additional **'s'** with the verb to make a present indefinite sense for a third-person singular subject.

Keeping the same example, you have noticed that we used **'is'** as a singular helping verb for a singular subject. That is a perfect agreement between the subject and the verb.

In the second example, "dogs" is a plural, and we used the plural verb "run" for that. Similarly, in the second part, we used "are" for the plural "they".

Rule 2.

Words Between Subject and Verb

The agreement between subject and verb is not affected by subordinate clauses and prepositional phrases. It is something significant to understand.

Examples:

- The dog, who was playing in the garden, is mine.
- The colours of the rainbow are charming.

Rule 3.

"Here" or "There"

A **subject is always placed after the verb** in a sentence with "here" or "there." It is significant to identify each part correctly.

- There is a problem with my car.
- There are issues with my car.
- Here is the tool you required.
- Here are the tools you require.

Rule 4.

Subject After Verb in Questions

It is not always the case that subjects come before verbs in questions. Identify the subject accurately before choosing the proper verb form.

- Where are the pieces in this box?
- Where is the key I left on the table?

Rule 5.

Joined by "and"

I consider it a very critical rule. A **plural verb** is typically required when "and" joins two subjects.

- Mark and David are jumping over the mate.
- Mark and David are going to the school.

Rule 6.

Two Subjects Separated by "and"

As observed in the previous rule, here, the verb is singular if the two subjects are separated by "and" **refers to the same person or thing as a whole.**

- Fried beans and rice **is** my favourite dish.
- Noodles and meatballs **are** a great meal.

Rule 7.

"Each", "Every" and "No"

We must use helping verbs as a singular when the following words come before the subject:

- each
- every
- no

Examples:

- Each one is ready to play.
- Every man and woman is required to check in.
- No one is allowed to play in the garden.

Rule 8.

Singular Subjects that End in "S"

Nouns such as "mathematics", "news", and "social studies" are singular even though they end with "s" and should be followed by singular verbs. The sentence "Mathematics is my loving subject." uses the singular verb "is" because mathematics is one discipline.

Example:

- Mathematics is my loving subject.

Rule 9.

Multiple Subjects Connected With Conjunction

We use singular verb If the subjects are both singular and are connected by the following words:

- Or
- Nor
- neither/nor
- either/or
- not only/but also

Similarly, we use a plural verb If the subjects are both plurals and are connected by the abovementioned conjunction:

Here are some examples:

- Either Emma or Mark is responsible for the decision.
- Not only horses but also cats are available at the animal shelter.

Rule 10.

Singular and Plural Subjects Connected by Conjunction

If one subject is singular and the other is plural, and the following words connect the words:

- Or
- Nor
- neither/nor
- either/or
- not only/but also

We use the singular helping verb if the second subject is singular. Similarly, we use plural helping verb form when the second subject is plural.

- Either the horses or the lion has escaped.
- Neither the lion nor the horses have escaped.

Similarly, when a subject's sentence is composed of singular nouns or pronouns and one or more plural nouns or pronouns combined with "**or**" or "**nor**", we should use the form of the verb that agrees with whichever noun is closest to the verb. For example, the sentence "**My brother or my sisters get the email every day.**" uses the plural verb "get" since the plural noun "sisters" is nearest to the verb.

- Either the horses or the lion has escaped from the zoo.

- Neither the lion nor the horses have escaped from the zoo.

Rule 11.

Units of Measurement or Time

Usually, singular verbs are used for measuring units or times.

- Four quarts of oil were needed.
- Ten minutes is enough time to get there.

Rule 12.

The object of the Preposition

The only time the object of the Preposition decides plural or singular verb forms is when noun and pronoun subjects that are followed by a prepositional phrase like:

- Some
- Half
- None
- More
- All

Then the object of the Preposition determines the form of the verb.

- All the chicken from the cage has gone.
- All the birds have been freed.

Rule 13.

Infinite Pronouns

Singular verbs are typically taken with indefinite pronouns. The following pronouns are exceptions to this rule:

- Few
- Everybody
- Anybody
- Many
- Several
- Both

These always take the plural form.

- Everybody wants to be liked.
- Few were left alone after the break.

Rule 14.

Accompanying Expressions

We use a singular verb when a singular subject remains singular, even followed by the following expressions, such as:

- With
- accompanied by
- Including
- as well

A singular verb should still follow the subject. The sentence "My brother, accompanied by his friend, volunteers at the preschool every Saturday." uses the singular verb "volunteers" because the addition of the phrase "accompanied by his friend" does not affect the singularity of the sentence's subject.

Rule 15.

Singular Subjects that Sound Plural

We must be careful when using the following singular nouns:

- Either
- Neither
- Everyone
- Everybody
- Anyone
- Nobody
- No one

Although these nouns sound more than one person or thing, they are all singular and should be paired with singular verbs. The sentence "**Everybody likes Ronaldo's game.**" uses the singular verb "likes" because "everybody" refers to each individual "body," or person.

Rule 16.

Gerunds

If a gerund is the subject of a sentence, it takes the singular form of the verb. The plural form, however, is used when gerunds are joined by "and."

- Standing in the water was a bad idea.
- Swimming in the ocean and playing drums are my hobbies.

Rule 17.

Collective Nouns

Some nouns such as "team," "group," "band," "family", and "class" imply the involvement of numerous people but are, nonetheless, singular nouns because they refer to collective entities. The sentence "The band sings my favorite song." uses the singular verb "sings." Although the band consists of more than one member, the subject "band" refers to the group as a whole unit.

Depending on the context, collective nouns like "team" or "staff" can be singular or plural. The singular form is usually used, as the collective noun is treated as a single, cohesive entity.

- The herd is drinking water.
- The flock is flying.

Rule 18.

Titles of Books

The titles of novels, movies and other similar works are singular and have singular verbs.

- The Bugs is an old movie starring Tom.
- The Old Man and The Sea is my favourite novel.

The errors of a subject-verb agreement are among the most common mistakes in English grammar. The general rule refers that singular nouns should agree with singular verbs, while plural nouns should accompany plural verbs. It can be confusing to determine whether a noun is singular or plural. A writer or student must be familiar with several types of subject-verb agreement to produce grammatically correct work.

After discussing rules and kinds of subject-verb agreement, we need to move to some critical and discussable topics that will clarify more in detail.

Subject-Verb Agreement Rule's Summary

In the end, the subject must agree with the verb in all decorum. Here are some finishing lines to remember:

- Subjects and verbs must agree in case and number.
- A singular subject requires a singular verb.
- The plural subject requires plural verbs.
- Multiple subjects require plural verbs.
- Spell out the contractions to avoid confusion.
- Uncountable nouns require singular subjects.
- Subordinate phrases do not affect the verb agreement.

I hope with the extensive practice you will be able to cope with it entirely. One more secret is to keep reading leading newspapers loudly. The subject-verb agreement is learned unconsciously. Cheers up
