



SNS COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Kurumbapalayam (Po), Coimbatore - 641 107



AN AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTION

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Approved by AICTE, New Delhi & Affiliated to Anna University, Chennai

Subject Verb Agreement

Concord in English language is the agreement between the noun & verb in number & tense. The subject and verb must agree in number: both must be singular, or both must be plural. Problems occur in the present tense because one must add an **-s** or **-es** at the end of the verb when the subjects or the entity performing the action is a singular third person: **he, she, it**, or words for which these pronouns could substitute.

Notice the difference between singular and plural forms in the following examples:

Singular

Plural

The student sings. (He or she sings) Your children sing. (They sing)

The bird does migrate. (It does) Those birds do migrate. (They do)

In order to find out if your subject and verb agree, you need to be able to identify the subject of your sentence. Here are some helpful hints that will help you to decipher where your subject is and where it is not.

Where is my subject?

- ◆ Most likely, **your verb will agree with the first noun to the left** of the verb:

The Supreme Court judge decides the appropriate penalty.

Subject: judge

Verb: decides

The committee members were satisfied with the resolution.

Subject: members

Verb: were

- ◆ Occasionally, a sentence has the **subject after the verb** instead of before it. This strategy is often used for poetic effect.

Over the ripples glides a small canoe.

Subject: a small canoe

Verb: glides

There was a well-known writer at the meeting.

Subject: a well-known writer

Verb: was



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- ◆ You will **not find the subject in a modifying phrase** (MP), a phrase that starts with a preposition, a gerund, or a relative pronoun and that modifies the meaning of the noun or subject under discussion.

The group of students is going on a field trip.

Subject: the group **MP:** of students **Verb:** is

The survey covering seven colleges reveals a growth in enrollment.

Subject: the survey

MP: covering seven colleges

Verb: reveals

The speaker whom you saw at the lecture is one of the state senators from Minnesota.

Subject: the speaker

MP: whom you saw at the lecture

Verb: is

- ◆ If subjects are joined by **and**, they are considered **plural**.

The quarterback and the coach are having a conference.

Subject: the quarterback and the coach **Verb:** are having

- ◆ If subjects are joined by **or** or **nor**, the verb should agree with the **closer subject**.

Either the actors or the director is at fault.

Subjects: actors, director **Verb:** is

Either the director or the actors are at fault.

Subjects: director, actors **Verb:** are

- ◆ The **relative pronouns** (who, whom, which, and that) are either **singular or plural**, depending on the words they refer to.

The sales manager is a good researcher who spends a great amount of time surfing the Web for information.



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Subject: the sales manager **Verbs:** is, spends

Sales managers are good researchers who spend a great amount of time surfing the Web for information.

Subject: sales managers **Verbs:** are, spend

- ◆ **Indefinite pronouns** (someone, somebody, each, either one, everyone, or anyone) are considered **singular** and need singular verbs although they convey plural meaning.

Anyone who wants to pursue higher education has to pass entrance exams.

Subject: anyone **Verbs:** wants, has

Everyone on the committee is welcome to express his/her ideas.

Subject: everyone **Verb:** is

- ◆ A few **nouns** can be either **plural** or **singular**, depending on whether they mean a group or separate individuals. These words are rarely used as plurals in modern writing.

The jury is sequestered.

Subject: jury **Verb:** is

The jury are having an argument.

Subject: jury **Verb:** are having

- ◆ A few subjects **look plural** but are really **singular** or vice versa.

The news of the discovery is spreading.

Subject: news **Verb:** is

The mass media have publicized the facts.

Subject: mass media **Verb:** have publicized

The data amaze everyone.

Subject: data **Verb:** amaze



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When words like "each" are the subject

When used as subjects, words such as

- ◆ each, either, neither
- ◆ another
- ◆ anyone, anybody, anything
- ◆ someone, somebody, something
- ◆ one, everyone
- ◆ everybody, everything
- ◆ no one, nobody, nothing take singular verbs.

Do not be confused by prepositional phrases which come between a subject and its verb. They do not change the number of the subject.

Each takes her turn at rowing.

Neither likes the friends of the other.

Everyone in the fraternity has his own set of prejudices.

Each of the rowers takes her turn at rowing.

Every one of the fraternity members has his own set of prejudices.

When words like "none" are the subject. Other words such as

- ◆ none, any, all
- ◆ more, most, some

may take either singular or plural verbs, depending on the context.

Some of the dollar was spent.

Some of the dollars were spent.

[**Note:** here the prepositional phrase does affect the subject. It tells you whether you are talking about a part of one thing (singular) or



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about a number of things (plural).]

When the subjects are joined by "and"

Subjects joined by "and" take plural verbs.

Be aware: phrases such as "in addition to," "as well as," and "along with" do not mean the same thing as "and." When inserted between the subject and the verb, these phrases do not change the number of the subject.

Both Tom and Jane have English 167 papers due on Tuesday.

Tom, as well as Jane, has an English 207 paper due Tuesday.

When singular subjects are joined by words like "or"

Singular subjects joined by "or," "nor," "either... or," or "neither... nor" take a singular verb.

Either the man or his wife knows the truth of the matter.

Neither money nor power was important any longer.

When one subject is singular and one plural

If one subject is singular and one is plural, the verb agrees with the nearer subject.

Neither the television nor the radios work.

Neither the radios nor the television works.

When a linking verb is used

A linking verb ("is," "are," "was," "were," "seem" and others) agrees with its subject, not its complement.

Joe's favorite dessert is blueberry muffins.

Blueberry muffins are Joe's favorite dessert.



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When a collective noun is used

When regarded as a unit, collective nouns, as well as noun phrases denoting quantity, take singular verbs.

The whole family is active.

(Family is a collective noun regarded as a unit.)

The family have met their various obligations.

(The individuals of the family are regarded separately.)

A thousand bushels is a good yield.

(a quantity or unit)

A thousand bushels were crated.

(individual bushels)

When a relative pronoun is used as a subject of an adjective clause

A relative pronoun ("who," "which," or "that") used as a subject of an adjective clause takes either a singular or plural verb in order to agree with its antecedent.

A vegetable that contains DDT can be harmful.

(Adjective clause modifying the singular noun "vegetable.")

Vegetables that contain DDT can be harmful.

(Adjective clause modifying the plural noun "vegetables.")

Mary is one of the students who have done honor to the college.

(Adjective clause modifies the plural noun "students." "Students" is the antecedent of "who.")



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In the above sentence Mary is just one of the students. So at least two students have done honor to the college.

Compare that to:

Mary is the only one of our students who has achieved national recognition.

In this case, "one," not "students," is the antecedent of "who."

FAST FACT

If the subject of a sentence is singular, the verb must also be singular.

If the subject is plural, the verb must be plural. Here's a secret, though: While a noun

that ends in -s is usually plural, a verb that ends in -s is usually singular!

EXERCISE - I

Read the following sentences and identify the subject, number (singular / plural), verb and the tense of the verb in each sentence.

1. All metals melt when heated.
2. The molten iron passes out of the furnace.
3. Centres are not suitable for every job on the lathe.
4. The ends of metal are heated to a white heat.
5. This principle applies to every process.
6. The new battery exploits sunlight.
7. He welds the plates together.
8. The drive starts the engine.
9. The mechanics dismantle the car.
10. Mercury level shoots up in a thermometer when heat increases.

EXERCISE - II

Fill in the blanks with suitable verbs :



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1. Either the candidate or the agent _____ (be) to be here
2. Learning mathematical tables by heart _____ (be) essential.
3. Neither of them _____ (is / are) to be trusted.
4. A set of tools _____ (was / were) available.
5. The number of employees _____ (have / has) increased by two times.
6. Nuclear fission _____ (release/releases) large quantity of energy.
7. Some condensers _____ (is / are) known as jet condensers.
8. Not any of these vehicles _____ (is / are) fit for travel.
9. It is one of the engines that _____ (was/were) mended last week.
10. Every wood _____ (have / has) its characteristic quality.

Exercise III

State whether the following sentences are correct or incorrect.

1. The last questions on the test were very difficult
2. John, as well as his younger brothers, is going to study at that school.
3. People from the South is very friendly.
4. Everyone need to be loved.
5. Part of the money goes to charity.
6. Statistics hasn't been revised as a course approach far too long.
7. You and I am supposed to clean the room before Mom gets home
8. Either the President or the Vice has signed the document.
9. Be careful. Grandma's scissors are very sharp.
10. No news are good news.

Exercise IV



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Choose the Correct Form of the Verb that Agrees with the Subject.

1. Either the physicians in this hospital or the chief administrator ____ (is / are) going to make a decision.
2. _____ (is / are) my boss or my sisters in the union going to win this case?
3. Some of the votes _____ (seem/ seems) to have been miscounted.
4. He seems to forget that there _____ (is/ are) things to be done before he can graduate.
5. A high percentage of the population _____ (is/are) voting for the new school.
6. One of my instructors _____ (has/have) written a letter of recommendation for me.

7. Either the Committee on Course Design or the Committee on College Operations _____ (decide /decides) these matters.
8. John or his brother _____(is/ are) going to be responsible for this.
9. Annie and her brothers _____(is/are) at school.
10. Either my mother or my father _____(is/ are) coming to the meeting.
11. The dog or the cats _____ (is/are) outside.
12. Either my shoes or your coat _____(is/ are) always on the floor.
13. George and Tamara _____ (doesn't/ don't) want to see that movie.
14. Benito _____ (doesn't/ don't) know the answer.
15. One of my sisters _____ (is/ are) going on a trip to France.
16. The man with all the birds _____ (live/ lives) in my street.
17. The movie, including all the previews_____ (take/ takes) about two hours to watch.
18. The players, as well as the captain, ____ (want/wants) to win.
19. Either answer _____ (is/ are) acceptable.
20. Every one of those books _____ (is/ are) fiction.
21. Nobody _____ (know/ knows) the trouble I've seen.
22. _____ (Is/ Are) the news on at five or six?
23. Mathematics _____(is/ are) John's favourite subject, while Civics (is, are) Andrea's favourite subject.
24. Eight dollars _____ (is/ are) the price of a movie these days.
25. There _____ (was/ were) fifteen candies in that bag. Now there _____(is/ are) only one left!

Exercise V

Fill in the blanks:

Soccer, on the other hand, except for its half-time break, has no time-outs; except for half-time, it is constant run, run, run, run, back and forth, back and forth, relentlessly, with only a few seconds of relaxation when a goal is scored, and that can happen seldom, sometimes never. The best that commercial television coverage can hope for is an injury time-out, and in soccer that _____only with

decapitation or disembowelment.

Second, Americans love their violence, and soccer doesn't deliver on this score the way that American football and hockey _____. There are brief moments, spurts of violence, yes, but fans can't expect the full-time menu of bone-crushing carnage that American football and hockey can deliver minute after minute, game after game. In soccer, players are actually singled out and warned - shamed, with embarrassingly silly "yellow cards," for acts of violence and duplicity that would be smiled at in most American sports other than tennis and golf.

Third, it is just too difficult to score in soccer. America_____its football games with scores like 49 to 35 and a professional basketball game with scores below 100_____regarded as a defensive bore. In soccer, on the other hand, scores like 2 to 1, even 1 to 0,_____commonplace and apparently desirable; games scoreless at the end of regulation time happen all the time. (In the 515 games played in the final phase in the history of the World Cup games through 1994, only 1584 goals____scored. That's three a game!) And if there____no resolution at the end of overtime, the teams resort to a shoot-out that_____more to do with luck than with real soccer skills. Worse yet, it is possible for a team to dominate in terms of sheer talent and "shots-on-goal" and still lose the game by virtue of a momentary lapse in defensive attention, a stroke of bad luck, and the opponent's break-away goal. Things like that can happen, too, in baseball, but the problem somehow_____out over baseball's very long season of daily games. In soccer, it just isn't fair. Soccer authorities should consider making the goal smaller and doing away with the goalie to

make scoring easier. And the business of starting over after each goal, in the middle of the field,_____to be reconsidered. It's too much like the center-jump after each goal in the basketball game of yesteryear.

It____unlikely that Americans will ever fully comprehend or appreciate a sport in which players are not allowed to use their arms and hands. Although the footwork of soccer players_____a magnificent skill to behold, most American fans are perplexed by straitjacketed soccer players' inability and unwillingness to "pick up the darn ball and run with it!" The inability to use substitutes (unless the players to be substituted for are lying dead or maimed on the field of play) _____also bewildering to Americans, who glorify the "sixth man" in basketball and a baseball game in which virtually the entire roster (including an otherwise unemployable old man called "the designated hitter"_____deployed on the field at one time or another.

Finally, the field in soccer is enormous. Considerably larger than the American football field, the soccer field could contain at least a dozen basketball courts. Americans like their action

condensed, in a small field of vision - ten enormous sweaty people bouncing off one another and moving rapidly through a space the size of a medium-sized bedroom, twenty-two even larger people in bulky uniforms converging on a small, oddly shaped ball. In soccer, on the other hand, there _____ a premium on "spreading out," not infringing upon the force field occupied by a team-mate, so that fancy foot-passing is possible. This spreading out across the vast meadow of the soccer playing field _____ not lend itself, again, to close get-down-and-dirty television scrutiny. Soccer is a great sport and it certainly _____ the increased attention and popularity it is getting on all levels. But - primarily, again, because it does not lend itself to television - it will never make it big in the United States the way these other sports _____, not until it _____ some of its fundamental strategies.

Exercise VI

Fill in the blanks with the correct verb from the line below:

(lock, turn on, watch, go, be, bring, drinks, open, turn off)

Hello Anna, I have to go now, here are the keys for the house, do not _____ the door to anybody please, you can _____ TV until late if you wish but remember to _____ all the lights and _____ the alarm before you _____ to bed. Make sure my son Eric is asleep before you _____ to bed and _____ the doors, we will _____ back by two in the morning. Ahh, and I forgot, Eric's milk is inside the refrigerator in a small bottle, he always _____ it before falling asleep, _____ a good girl and don't _____ any people in the house. I will see you at two.

Error Spotting - I

1. She is engaged with David
2. I am concerned about your health.
3. He did it according with your orders.
4. Work in accordance to rule.
5. Don't check me to borrow money.
6. Don't despair to succeed.
7. Don't discourage her to learn French..
8. They will not listen your request.
9. He must compensate this loss.
10. Has he disposed the application?.

Puzzle:

Read each of the sentences below, and underline the verb that

agrees with the subject. Then write the correct verbs in the puzzle. The last letter of one answer will be the first letter of the next answer. Some answers will go around corners.

1. Bears (has, have) a powerful sense of smell.
2. We (eat, eats) out about twice a month.
3. He always (try, tries) to do his homework before dinner.
4. On the island, the sun (shine, shines) almost every day.
5. The recipe (says, say) to cook the muffins for 25 minutes.
6. They (swim, swims) in the lake every afternoon.
7. I (make, makes) the best lemonade in town!
8. Ralph (earn, earns) money by mowing his neighbor's lawn.
9. The kids often (swing, swings) at the playground.
10. My house plants (grows, grow) an inch every month.
11. Henry (were, was) in charge of the class party.
12. At lunch time, Rita always (sit, sits) near the windows.
13. They (switch, switches) seats every week.
14. Christopher (has, have) on a striped sweater today.

Quiz:

This quiz will cover simple subjects, compound subjects using "and" or "or" that connect singular subjects, and verbs that agree with them. Underline the correct verb in these sentences.

1. Sally (run, runs) to the park every day.
2. The dogs (bark, barks,) at strangers.
3. Ted and Mary (is, are) going to the movies.
4. The game (was, were) exciting.
5. They (worry, worries) too much.
6. She (study, studies) every night.
7. Black or white (is, are) your choice.
8. That (was, were) incredible.
9. Those (is, are) pretty shoes.
10. The cat or dog (is, are) in the yard.

Put a C if the sentence is correct, an X if it is not correct.

1. ___ They have been waiting a long time.
2. ___ The pen or the pencil are lost.
3. ___ Someone don't understand.
4. ___ Those has been cheaper in the past.
5. ___ Randy and Juan like sports.
6. ___ These are really special.
7. ___ You rides with me.
8. ___ All of them goes to school.
9. ___ Tony likes Mary.
10. ___ That movie was awesome.

Subject Verb Agreement: Quiz 2

This quiz covers compound subjects with one singular and one plural noun or pronoun, complex sentences, and special nouns that can be confusing, like collective and nouns that end with an "s" that are singular.

Underline the correct verb in these sentences.

1. The girl or her sisters (watch, watches) television every day.
2. Rob (doesn't, don't) like sports.
3. His classmates (study, studies) before a test.
4. One of the cookies (is, are) missing.
5. A lady with 10 cats (live, lives) in that big house.
6. Mumps (is, are) very serious.
7. The committee (decide, decides) when to adjourn.
8. Our team (is, are) the best.
9. Everybody (enjoy, enjoys) a good song.
10. Either (is, are) suitable.

Put a C if the sentence is correct, an X if it is not correct.

1. ___ Cats and dogs love to run.
2. ___ He don't like chocolate.
3. ___ Her friends or Sarah excel at volleyball.
4. ___ Each of these have been ruined.

5. ___ Trousers are baggy now.
6. ___ The students, as well as the teacher, are nervous about the test.
7. ___ The news are on at 10.
8. ___ My family are a lot of fun.
9. ___ Mathematics is hard for many.
10. ___ The director, with all the cast members, works very hard.