

The 20 Rules of Subject Verb Agreement in Standard English

1. **Subjects and verbs must agree in number.** This is the cornerstone rule that forms the background of the concept.

The *dog **growls*** when he is angry. The *dogs **growl*** when they are angry.

2. **Don't get confused by the words that come between the subject and verb; they do not affect agreement.**

The *dog, who is chewing on my jeans, **is*** usually very good.

3. **Prepositional phrases between the subject and verb usually do not affect agreement.**

The *colours of the rainbow **are*** beautiful.

4. **When sentences start with "there" or "here," the subject will always be placed after the verb, so care needs to be taken to identify it correctly.**

There ***is*** a problem with the balance sheet. Here ***are*** the papers you requested.

5. **Subjects don't always come before verbs in questions. Make sure you accurately identify the subject before deciding on the proper verb form to use.**

Does *Lefty* usually ***eat*** grass? Where ***are*** the *pieces* of this puzzle?

6. **If two subjects are joined by *and*, they typically require a plural verb form.**

The *cow and the pig **are jumping*** over the moon.

7. **The verb is singular if the two subjects separated by *and* refer to the same person or thing.**

*Red beans and rice **is*** my mom's favourite dish.

8. **If one of the words *each, every, or no* comes before the subject, the verb is singular.**

*No smoking or drinking **is*** allowed. *Every man and woman **is*** required to check in.

9. **If the subjects are both singular and are connected by the words *or, nor, neither/nor, either/or,* and *not only/but also* the verb is singular.**

*Either Jessica or Christian **is*** to blame for the accident.

10. **The only time when the object of the preposition factors into the decision of plural or singular verb forms is when noun and pronoun subjects like *some, half, none, more, all,* etc. are followed by a prepositional phrase. In these sentences, the object of the preposition determines the form of the verb.**

*All of the chicken **is*** gone. *All of the chickens **are*** gone.

11. **The singular verb form is usually used for units of measurement.**

*Four quarts of oil **was*** required to get the car running.

12. **If the subjects are both plural and are connected by the words *or, nor, neither/nor, either/or,* and *not only/but also,* the verb is plural.**

*Dogs and cats **are*** both available at the pound.

13. **If one subject is singular and one plural and the words are connected by the words *or, nor, neither/nor, either/or,* and *not only/but also,* you use the verb form of the subject that is nearest the verb.**

*Either the bears or the lion **has*** escaped from the zoo. *Neither the lion nor the bears **have*** escaped from the zoo.

14. **Indefinite pronouns typically take singular verbs.**

*Everybody **wants*** to be loved.

15. * **Except for the pronouns (*few, many, several, both, all, some*) that always take the plural form.**

*Few **were*** left alive after the flood.

16. **If two infinitives are separated by *and* they take the plural form of the verb.**

*To walk and to chew gum **require*** great skill.

17. **When gerunds are used as the subject of a sentence they take the singular verb form of the verb, but when they are linked by *and* they take the plural form.**

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

18. Collective nouns like herd, senate, class, crowd, etc. usually take a singular verb form.

The class **is** restless.

19. Titles of books, movies, novels, etc. are treated as singular and take a singular verb.

The Burbs **is** a movie starring Tom Hanks.

20. Final Rule – Remember, only the subject affects the verb!

Information taken from: <http://www.yourdictionary.com/grammar-rules/20-Rules-of-subject-verb-agreement.html>

Understanding Subject Verb Agreement

When discussing [subject verb agreement](#), it's helpful to remember that a singular subject takes a singular verb and a plural subject takes a plural verb. However, there are a few exceptions to this rule. For example:

- **Anyone, everyone, someone, no one, and nobody** always require singular verbs.
- Neither and either require singular verbs even though they seem to be referring to two separate things.
- Sums of money or periods of time require a singular verb.
- When a sentence compounds a positive and a negative subject and only one is plural, the verb should agree with the positive subject.
- Words that indicate portions of a whole, such as percent, fraction, some, all, none, and remainder require a singular verb only if the object of the preposition is singular.
- **Who, that, and which** are singular or plural according to the noun directly in front of them.
- Typically, you should use a plural verb with two or more subjects when they are connected by **and**.
- There and here are never considered to be subjects. In sentences beginning with here or there, the subject follows the verb.
- **As well as** and **along with** do not function the same as **and**. The phrase introduced by **as well as** or **along with** modifies the earlier word, but does not compound the subjects.
- If a sentence includes modifiers between the subject and verb, this does not affect whether the verb is singular or plural.
- Just because a word ends in –s does not automatically make it plural. Consider the word *is* as an example of this rule.
- A **collective noun** such as team or staff can be either singular or plural depending upon the rest of the sentence.

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