

Subject-Verb Agreement A

18b. A verb should agree in number with its subject.

(1) Singular subjects take singular verbs.

(2) Plural subjects take plural verbs.

18c. The number of a subject is not changed by a word in a phrase or a clause following the subject.

EXAMPLES That **plan sounds** feasible to me. [singular subject and verb]

The **girls and boys** on the tennis team **are having** a car wash. [plural subject and verb]

To finish three chapters **is** my goal.

The lead **singer**, as well as the band members, **is rehearsing**.

The **funds** that they raise from this event **are** for charity.

EXERCISE A In each of the following sentences, underline the subject of the verb in parentheses. Then, underline twice the verb in parentheses that agrees in number with the subject.

Example 1. My parents, who both enjoy editorials, often (*has, have*) interesting discussions about the columns.

- Opinions on the editorial page (*is, are*) often diverse.
- Ellen Goodman, as well as other writers, (*speaks, speak*) on political issues.
- A person who reads daily newspapers (*keeps, keep*) up on the issues.
- One writer of humorous columns (*is, are*) Art Buchwald.
- Government policy, along with rising taxes, (*receives, receive*) his barbs.

EXERCISE B Proofread the following sentences for errors in subject-verb agreement. Cross out each incorrect verb form, and write the correct form in the space above it. If a sentence is already correct, write C at the end.

Example 1. Prince Olaf, accompanied by many members of his court, ^{was}~~were~~ seen shopping at the mall.

- Her answer to all requests of this kind are the same.
- A few members of the club usually dominate the proceedings.
- The editorials in a newspaper often reflect the editor's personal bias.
- The coach of the team, as well as the student co-captains, are going to speak at the banquet.
- The success of amateur productions depend largely on the producer.

Agreement of Subject and Verb B

16b. A verb should agree in number with its subject.

(1) Singular subjects take singular verbs.

(2) Plural subjects take plural verbs.

SINGULAR He **sings** in the choir. She **has been drawing**.

PLURAL They **sing** in the choir. They **have been drawing**.

16c. The number of the subject usually is not determined by a word in a phrase or clause following the subject.

EXAMPLE The **documentary** on runners in Kenya **was** fascinating.

EXERCISE In each sentence below, underline the verb that agrees with its subject.

Example 1. The name of the student with the highest grades (has, *have*) been announced.

1. The vase of flowers (*is*, *are*) on the table.
2. The photographs on the table (*reminds*, *remind*) me of our recent trip.
3. The pole vault, as well as the high jump, (*is*, *are*) Abdul's specialty.
4. Bears (*lives*, *live*) in those mountains.
5. Rome, together with Venice, (*has*, *have*) many interesting sights.
6. Lemon (*enhances*, *enhance*) the flavor in fish.
7. The tigers at our hometown zoo (*roams*, *roam*) freely on an island.
8. Spinach, in addition to squash, (*is*, *are*) very nourishing.
9. The highest mountains in the world (*rises*, *rise*) in the Himalayas.
10. The plays we read in speech class (*is*, *are*) based on historical events.
11. The grass on the lawns (*gets*, *get*) parched when we have a hot, dry summer.
12. Anaba, along with her brothers, (*wants*, *want*) to learn some traditional songs.
13. That pair of scissors with the orange handles (*is*, *are*) missing.
14. My aunt from the Netherlands (*loves*, *love*) to travel.
15. Three students in my math class (*is*, *are*) going to the state finals.
16. Coyotes, rattlesnakes, and lizards (*thrives*, *thrive*) in the Mexican desert.
17. Many beautiful fish near the reef in Cozumel (*swims*, *swim*) lazily below us.
18. The grandparents of my best friend (*has*, *have*) always lived in Guadalajara.
19. Dust mites in the air (*is*, *are*) a problem for people with allergies.
20. The top of those bushes (*reaches*, *reach*) almost to the second story.

Agreement of Subject and Verb E

16g. Subjects joined by *and* generally take a plural verb.

EXAMPLE Justin Leonard and Annika Sörenstam are famous professional golfers.

Compound subjects that name only one person, place, thing, or idea take a singular verb.

16h. Singular subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a singular verb. Plural subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a plural verb.

EXAMPLE Either a doctor or a nurse checks on the hospital patients each morning.

16i. When a singular subject and a plural subject are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject nearer the verb.

EXAMPLES Neither the band members nor the singer feels ready for the performance.
Neither the singer nor the band members feel ready for the performance.

EXERCISE A Underline the verb that agrees with the compound subject of the sentence.

Example 1. Macaroni and cheese (is, are) on the menu for lunch today.

- Three women and a man (*makes*, make) up the conference committee.
- The leading actor and dancer (*is*, are) Gregory Hines.
- Neither her play nor her novels (*is*, are) widely read.
- Maya Angelou and Joan Didion (*writes*, write) about personal experiences.
- Neither the actors nor their director (*has*, have) staged a play by Wilson before.
- Neither the pitcher nor the outfielders (*is*, are) playing well today.
- Recycling and paper drives (*is*, are) helpful for the environment.
- The conductor and the musicians of the symphony (*is*, are) very talented.
- Either the eggs or the milk (*seems*, seem) spoiled.
- Neither the trees nor the flowers (*fares*, fare) well in this heat.

EXERCISE B Circle the subject and underline the verb that agrees with the subject.

Example 1. The (producer) and (director) of the film (is, are) Steven Spielberg.

- Neither the managers nor the workers (*agrees*, agree) with the negotiator.
- Jason Granholm and Ty Nguyen (*is*, are) the winners of the poetry contest.
- Either the puppies or their mother (*has*, have) torn a hole in that chair.
- Neither Beatriz nor her sisters (*attends*, attend) Southdale High School.
- Those plants and the ones next to the window (*blooms*, bloom) each spring.

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Agreement of Subject and Verb F

16g. Subjects joined by *and* generally take a plural verb.

Compound subjects that name only one person, place, thing, or idea take a singular verb.

EXAMPLE My **mother and father** **cook** excellent meals.

16h. Singular subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a singular verb. Plural subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a plural verb.

EXAMPLE Neither the **guests** nor the **hosts** **are dancing**.

16i. When a singular subject and a plural subject are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject nearer the verb.

EXAMPLES Neither the players nor the **coach** **is** happy with the game.
Neither the coach nor the **players** **are** happy with the game.

EXERCISE A Circle the subject and underline the verb that agrees with the subject.

Example 1. Either Tom or Susan (*live, lives*) on the next street.

1. The singer and songwriter of the CD (*is, are*) a talented artist.
2. Neither Beth nor her parents (*is, are*) able to come to the concert.
3. Cynthia or Tania (*want, wants*) to go hiking this weekend.
4. Either the council members or the president (*has, have*) the right to make the decision.
5. Beverly and Rafael (*agrees, agree*) that the house needs to be painted.

EXERCISE B If a verb does not agree with its subject, cross out the incorrect verb and write the correct verb above it. If a verb is already correct, write *C* above it.

Example 1. Neither my mother nor my aunts ^{have} ~~has~~ perfect vision.

6. Both Cocheta and Amalia buys their clothes with money from their jobs.
7. Either Will Rogers or James Thurber are the author of that quotation.
8. Neither the residents nor the governor want the bridge to be built.
9. Does the Arnolds or the MacLeods always bring the salsa?
10. Neither my sister nor my mom are willing to go with me.
11. Neither Delores nor any of the other girls wants to go surfing with me.
12. Neither the ghosts nor the pirates in the haunted house scares me.
13. Either the mail carrier or the meter readers have been leaving my gate open.
14. The hamster and the mouse seems healthier since we got the new feeders.
15. The room and board at the dormitory seem reasonable.