

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

GRAMMAR



WHAT IS SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT?

Every complete English sentence requires at least one subject and one verb. Some verbs take a different form in order to match a subject. This is called **subject-verb agreement**.

Your main concern with subject-verb agreement should be third person singular subjects:



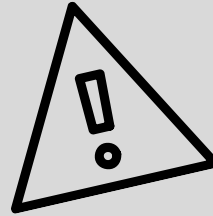
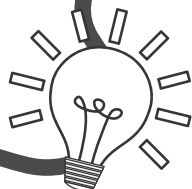
Most simple, present tense verbs add the ending "-s" when used with third person singular subjects.

My daughter **dislikes** practicing piano.

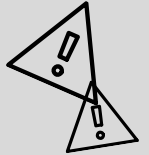
This handout **shows** simple examples before it **shows** complicated examples.

Remember to use **third person singular verbs** with **most indefinite pronouns!**

everyone is
no one is
something is



PITFALLS



Gerunds

A gerund is an "-ing" form of a verb that is used as a noun. If you use a gerund as a subject, your verb will be third person singular.



Identifying a gerund is tricky.

Studying requires dedication.

Relative Pronouns

Adjective clauses begin with a relative pronoun. This relative pronoun matches the number of the noun to which it refers.

I have a friend **who speaks** five languages.
"who" = friend (third person singular)

I have many friends **who speak** more than one language.
"who" = friends (plural)

A question **that is** unasked will remain unanswered.

"that" = question (third person singular)

Questions **that are** unasked will remain unanswered.

"that" = questions (plural)



Long Subjects

Sometimes a subject can be so long that it is difficult to tell what verb form to use. For long subjects, try to find the simple subject. Ask yourself "What is doing the action?"

My parents' ancient **car** still **runs** reliably.

subject: "car" (third person singular)

The company **president**, accompanied by several staff members, **is** traveling to Paris.

subject: "president"

One of my cats **likes** to chase lizards.

prepositional phrase: [of my cats]

subject: "one" (third person singular)



Abby said that **most** of her homework **is** done.

prepositional phrase: [of her homework]

subject: "most" (third person singular)

Some tricky collective nouns always take third person singular (even though they look plural!)

my family is
the crowd is
the army is
the audience is



PRACTICE WITH SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Look at the sentences below and fill in the correct form of the verb in parentheses.

1. During this celebration, most businesses (be) closed and the employees (take) a day off.
2. One of the hardest jobs for parents (involve) raising thoughtful and responsible children.
3. Every student who (study) and (participate) in class will see great improvement in his or her skills.
4. Watching good movies (be) a great way to relax and unwind.
5. Many countries, like my country, (want) to be part of the global economy.
6. My extended family (be) coming for the holidays, and I want to be sure that no one (be) uncomfortable, so I have been working hard to prepare everything perfectly!