Usage - Subject-Verb Agreement

<u>Subjects</u> and <u>verbs</u> must AGREE with one another in **number** (singular or plural). Thus, if a subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if a subject is plural, its verb must also be plural.

In present tenses, nouns and verbs form plurals in opposite ways:

nouns ADD an s to the singular form,

BUT

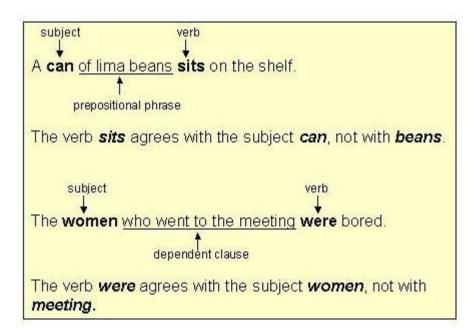
verbs REMOVE an **s** from the singular form.

The dog chases the cat.	The dogs chase the cat.
<u>†</u> †	<u>†</u> †
singular singular	plural plural
-S +S	+S -S

Here are nine subject-verb agreement rules.

1. A <u>phrase</u> or <u>clause</u> between subject and verb does not change the number of the subject.

Examples:



2. Indefinite pronouns as subjects

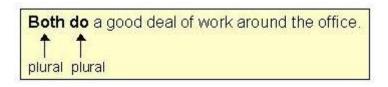
Singular indefinite pronoun subjects take singular verbs.

SINGULAR: each, either, neither, one, no one, nobody, nothing, anyone, anybody, anything, someone, somebody, something, everyone, everybody, everything

Each does a good deal of work around the office.

• Plural indefinite pronoun subjects take plural verbs.

PLURAL: several, few, both, many



• Some indefinite pronouns may be either singular or plural: with *uncountable*, use singular; with *countable*, use plural.

EITHER SINGULAR OR PLURAL: some, any, none, all, most

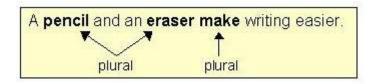
Some of the	sugar is on the floor.
†	Ť
singular	singular

Sugar is *uncountable*; therefore, the sentence has a singular verb.

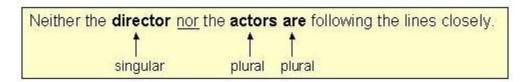
Some of the	marbles are on the floor.
t	Ť
plural	plural

Marbles are *countable*; therefore, the sentence has a plural verb.

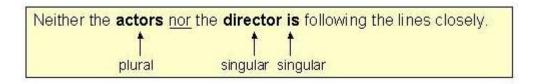
3. <u>Compound subjects</u> joined by and are always plural.



4. With **compound subjects joined by** *or/nor*, the verb agrees with the subject nearer to it.

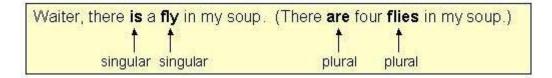


In the above example, the plural verb *are* agrees with the nearer subject *actors*.



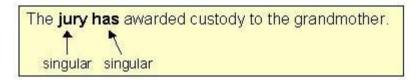
In this example, the singular verb *is* agrees with the nearer subject *director*.

5. Inverted Subjects must agree with the verb.





6. Collective Nouns (*group, jury, crowd, team, etc.*) may be singular or plural, depending on meaning.



In this example, the jury is acting as one unit; therefore, the verb is singular.

The jury mem	ers have been arguing for five da	ys.
†	Ť	
plural	plural	

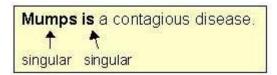
In this example, the jury members are acting as twelve individuals; therefore, the verb is plural.

7. Titles of single entities (*books, organizations, countries,* etc.) are always **singular**.

The Grapes of Wrath takes a long time to read.	
	Ť
singular	singular

8. Plural form subjects

• Plural form subjects with a singular meaning take a singular verb. (e.g. *news, measles, mumps, physics, etc.)*



• Plural form subjects with singular or plural meaning take a singular or plural verb, depending on meaning. (e.g. *politics, economics,* etc.)

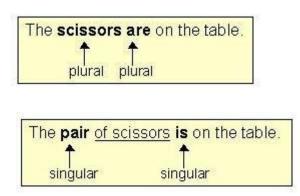
Politics	is an interesting subject.
1	•
singular	singular

In this example, politics is a single topic; therefore, the sentence has a singular verb.

The politics	of the situation were complicated.
1	†
plural	plural

In this example, politics refers to the many aspects of the situation; therefore, the sentence has a plural verb.

• Plural form subjects with a plural meaning take a plural verb. (e.g. *scissors, trousers*)

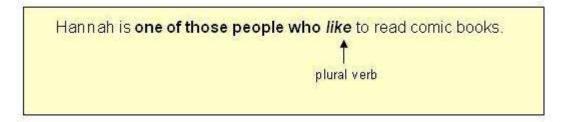


Note: In this example, the subject of the sentence is *pair*, therefore, the verb must agree with it. (Because *scissors* is the object of the <u>preposition</u>, *scissors* <u>does</u> <u>not affect</u> the number of the verb.)

9. With subject and subjective complement of different number, the verb always agrees with the <u>subject</u>.

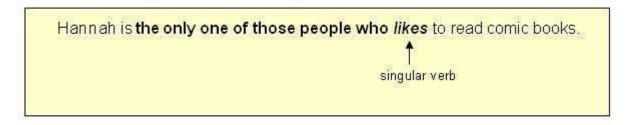


10-A. With <u>one of</u> those ______ who, use a plural verb.



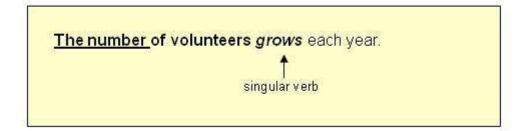
The above example implies that others besides Hannah like to read comic books. Therefore, the plural verb is the correct form to use.

10-B. With <u>the only one of those</u> ______who, use a singular verb.



The above example implies that no one else except for Hannah likes to read comic books. Therefore, the singular verb is the correct for to use.

11-A. With *the number* of _____, use a singular verb.



11-B. With <u>a number of</u> _____, use a plural verb.



12. With every ______ and many a ______, use a singular verb.

