

The Writing Center

at
Trident Technical College

Subjects and their verbs must agree in number. If the subject is singular (one), the verb must be in singular form. Likewise, if the subject is plural (more than one), the verb must be in plural form.

In general, when a subject ends in –s it is plural; when a verb ends in –s it is singular.

Therefore, you usually see only one –s ending between the subject and the verb.

Singular: The *dog_ plays* fetch.

The *student_ writes* a paper.

Plural: The *dogs play_* fetch.

The *students write_* their papers.

Important note: This “rule” does not work for all subjects and verbs.

- ❖ Be careful with nouns with irregular plural forms, such as *women* and *children*; these are plural and need plural verbs. (Women smile. Children run.)
- ❖ Be careful with singular nouns that end in –s, such as *news* and *mathematics*, and place names such as *United States*; these are singular and need singular verbs. (The news frightens me.)

Words coming between the subject and verb: Ignore these words when working on agreement; this “rule” includes phrases beginning with *as well as*, *together with*, *along with*, *in addition to*, *not to mention*, and *including*.

The job *requirements* most often looked for by a new employer *are* easy to identify.

My *supervisor*, as well as my co-workers, *is* urging me to apply for a promotion.

Compound subjects: Subjects joined by “and” usually take plural verbs. (John and Sam are my brothers.)

If they are preceded by *each* or *every*, the verb is usually singular. (Every number and letter is in bold.)

The subject is singular if the parts refer to a singular idea. (Rice and beans is my favorite meal.)

Parts of subject joined by “or” or “nor”: The verb agrees with the nearer part.

The *classroom or the building needs* to be repainted.

Either a *child or his parents decide* on how to decorate the child’s room.

Indefinite pronouns:

- ❖ Most indefinite pronouns are singular, such as *everyone*, *everything*, *each*, *anyone*, and *much*.

Everyone is planning for the upcoming holiday.

- ❖ Some indefinite pronouns are plural: *both*, *few*, *many*, and *several*.

Both are new.

- ❖ Some indefinite pronouns are either singular or plural, depending on usage: *all*, *any*, *more*, *most*, *none*, *some*

All of the instructors are available for tutoring; *All of the student body is* eager to graduate.

Collective nouns: When the group acts together as a unit, it’s singular; when acting individually, it’s plural.

The *team is* planning on a celebration after the game.

The *staff are* working on developing their resumes.

Inverted subject-verb order: The verb still must agree with its subject.

There *are* many *reasons* for my return to school.

Is studying a chore or a delight?

(08/08)



Subject-Verb Agreement

The Writing Center

at
Trident Technical College

In the following sentences, identify which verb in parentheses agrees with the subject of the sentence.

1. The sound of the wind and the waves (was, were) soothing.
2. The ingredients of that new, complicated dish (is, are) difficult to find in your average grocery store.
3. An inconsiderate manner, not to mention an over-inflated ego, (is, are) a real turn-off.
4. My sons and my daughter (argue, argues) at least once a day.
5. Building a good marriage and building a good log fire (is, are) similar in many ways.
6. My parents or my grandmother (send, sends) money to us regularly.
7. Neither Carol nor Ted (is, are) excluded from the meeting.
8. Patty or her sons (was, were) asked to attend the concert in the park.
9. Everybody in the family (has, have) tickets.
10. None of the students (are, is) planning on playing around this weekend; the test is on Monday.
11. Each of the instructors (is, are) concerned about student attendance records.
12. Few examples of new technology (is, are) reliable in the long-term.
13. Every nook and cranny of the neighborhood (is, are) to be searched to find my lost puppy.
14. Most of the football games (was, were) thrilling this year.
15. All of the candy in the Easter baskets (were, was) delicious.
16. Some of our success (is, are) a result of luck.
17. The committee (is, are) meeting this afternoon.
18. The faculty (was, were) in their offices.
19. There (is, are) a wealth of information about how to write an effective resume.
20. (Are, Is) bagels and waffles healthy choices for breakfast?

This quiz is based on one provided by Eryln Baack at <http://eslbee.com>; more quizzes are available at <http://eslbee.com/sv.htm>.

Answers:	1) was
	2) are
	3) is
	4) argue
	5) are
	6) sends
	7) is
	8) were
	9) has
	10) is
	11) is
	12) are
	13) is
	14) were
	15) was
	16) is
	17) is
	18) were
	19) is
	20) Are



Subject-Verb Agreement