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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The dog_ plays fetch.</td>
<td>The dogs play_fetch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student_ writes a paper.</td>
<td>The students write_ their papers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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)
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 Erlyn 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