

Subject-Verb Agreement

In grammar, subject-verb agreement refers to the correspondence in form between a verb and its subject. Every verb in a clause or sentence must agree in *number* and *person* with its subject. That is, make a verb singular if its subject is singular; make a verb plural if its subject is plural.

The Basics: Subjects in the first and second person take plural verbs, as does the third person plural. The third person singular takes a singular verb, as illustrated in the chart below.

Point-of-View	Singular	Plural
First-Person	I talk.	We talk.
Second-Person	You talk.	You talk.
Third-Person	He/she/it talks.	They talk.
	The woman talks.	Women talk.

To make a verb singular, add an -s or -es ending to your verb. To make a verb plural, leave off the -s or -es ending.

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Example (singular subject): The student lives on East South Street.

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Example (plural subject): The students live on East South Street.

Exceptions: Sometimes singular subjects may appear to be plural. Other words may look plural even though they are singular.

Follow these rules for subject-verb agreement.

Rule 1: The following indefinite pronouns are singular and take singular verbs.

anyone	everyone	someone	either	one	
anybody		everybody	somebody	neither	no one
anything		everything	something	another	each

Example: Everyone is anxious to start the new school year.

Rule 2: The following pronouns are plural and take a plural verb.

both **few** **many** **several**

Rule 8: Two singular words joined with “**and**” form a plural subject. When two subjects are joined with “**or**,” the verb agrees in number with subject that is closer to the verb.

Example: A magazine subscription **and** a book club membership make good gifts.

Example: Magazine subscriptions **or** a book club membership makes a good gift for a friendship.

Strategy: When you edit sentences for subject-verb agreement, use this 5-step test.

1. Find the subject by asking whom or what the sentence is about.
2. Determine whether the subject is singular or plural.
3. Locate the verb.
4. Determine whether the verb is singular or plural.
5. If the subject and verb are both singular or both plural, they agree. If they do not agree, make the needed adjustment.