

## SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT- PART 1

In every complete sentence, there exists two components. First, the **subject** is a word or phrase in a sentence indicating who or what is performing the action of the verb. Second, the **verb** is the word or group of words used to indicate an action, state, or occurrence. Since the form of the verb indicates the action, state, or occurrence of the subject, we realize that the subject and the verb have a relationship. Therefore, the subject and the verb in a sentence work together, and they must always agree in **number** (singular or plural) and **person** (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup>).

### Basic Rule of Agreement

When the subject is singular, one -s or -es is added to the present tense verb; however, when the subject is plural (more than one), nothing is added to the verb. Although the addition of -s or -es to a noun indicates the plural form, adding -s or -es to a verb indicates a third person singular verb.

<b>GENERAL SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT</b>
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<b>RULE Singular subjects:</b> add -s
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<b>Plural subjects:</b> no ending
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**Singular** refers to one:

The adventurer <b>hikes</b> to the top of Mount Everest.
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<b>Subject:</b> adventurer
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<b>Verb:</b> hikes
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In this sentence, the subject, **adventurer**, is singular in number. Only one adventurer is hiking. In order for the subject and the verb to agree, the verb (**hikes**) has an -s ending to make it a third person singular verb.

**Plural** refers to more than one:

The adventurers <b>hike</b> to the top of Mount Everest.
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<b>Subject:</b> adventurers
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<b>Verb:</b> hike
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In this sentence, the subject, **adventurers**, is plural. There is more than one adventurer hiking. Since the subject is plural, the verb **hike** has no ending.

## Pronoun Agreement

When a **pronoun** is the subject of a sentence, the pronoun must also agree with the **verb**. A way to check that the subject and verb agree in number is to substitute an equivalent **subject pronoun** for the original subject of the sentence. First, determine whether the subject is singular or plural. Then by using the chart below, choose the corresponding subject pronoun equivalent to the subject. **Subject pronouns** are listed in the table below:

Singular	Plural
I	We
You	You
He, She, It, They*	They

### \*A Note on the Singular They

The singular “they” is a generic third-person singular pronoun that is widely used and accepted by the Associated Press, MLA, APA, the Oxford English Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Dictionary, and many others.

The singular “they” is used in order to avoid assumptions about which pronouns a person uses. If you do not know the pronouns of the person you are talking about, it is considered more appropriate to use “they/them/their” than to guess whether the person uses “he” or “she”.

That person ate their meal quickly.	
<b>Subject:</b> person	<b>Verb:</b> ate

Since we don’t know this person’s pronouns and don’t want to assume, we can replace the subject “person” with “they”.

Lionel Messi won the Award for Sportsman of the Year.	
<b>Subject:</b> Lionel Messi	<b>Verb:</b> won

Public figures have their pronouns available through what is written about them. Similarly, writers and academics have this information available in their author bios. In this case, we know we can replace the subject **Lionel Messi** with **he**.

The hungry <b>children eat</b> the scrumptious chocolate cake.	
<b>Subject:</b> children	<b>Verb:</b> eat

We can replace the subject, **children**, with **they** to confirm that the subject of the sentence is plural.

<b>Tip:</b> Substitute an equivalent subject pronoun in place of the original subject to check if the subject and verb agree in the sentence.
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## Exceptions

### Irregular Plural Nouns

Just as the English language has many exceptions, the general subject-verb agreement rule has one main exception. When the subject is an irregular plural noun, we still do not need to add an –s ending on the verb, since the subject is still plural even though it does not end in –s. A few examples of irregular plural nouns include **men**, **children**, and **mice**. Each of these nouns is pluralized by changing the root of the word.

### Irregular Plurals

Singular subjects	Plural subjects
Man Child Mouse	Men Children
	Mice
<b>Note:</b> Irregular pluralized nouns, subjects which are plural but have no –s ending, do not require an –s ending on the verb.	

### Irregular Verbs

Now that we have covered irregular pluralized nouns, we can continue on to irregular verbs. The **irregular verb *be*** (is, am, are, was, were) and **helping verbs** (be, have, do) are made to agree with their subjects.

### Singular – *to be* (present tense)

The math <b>test is</b> difficult.	
<b>Subject:</b> test	<b>Verb:</b> is

### Plural – *to be* (present tense)

The math <b>tests are</b> difficult.	
<b>Subject:</b> tests	<b>Verb:</b> are

### Singular – to be (past tense)

The exhausted <b>farmer was</b> sleeping.	
<b>Subject:</b> farmer	<b>Helping Verb:</b> was

### Plural - to be (past tense)

The exhausted <b>farmers were</b> sleeping.	
<b>Subject:</b> farmers	<b>Helping Verb:</b> were

### Singular – helping verb

The hot <b>sun has</b> melted the child's ice cream.	
<b>Subject:</b> sun	<b>Helping Verb:</b> has

### Plural – helping verbs

The <b>parents have</b> tried to clean up the messy children. <b>Sub-</b>	
<b>ject:</b> parents	<b>Helping Verb:</b> have

When a verb has two or more subjects, the result is a compound subject. Writers should look at each compound subject carefully, paying attention to connecting words.

**Reminder:** Irregular and helping verbs must agree with the subject of the sentence.

### Exercise 1

First, underline the subject and determine whether it is singular (S) or plural (P). Continue by completing the rest of the sentence with a verb that agrees with the subject. The first question has been completed for you.

1. ( **S** ) The ballet dancer **moves** gracefully across the stage.
2. (    ) The chocolate lovers \_\_\_\_\_.
3. (    ) The motorcyclist \_\_\_\_\_.
4. (    ) An opossum \_\_\_\_\_.
5. (    ) Newborn babies \_\_\_\_\_.
6. (    ) The professional tennis player \_\_\_\_\_.
7. (    ) Dr. Seuss's famous children's books \_\_\_\_\_.
8. (    ) Soccer players \_\_\_\_\_.
9. (    ) The computer nerds \_\_\_\_\_.
10. (    ) Albert Einstein \_\_\_\_\_.

### Exercise 2

First, determine whether the subject of the sentence is singular (S) or plural (P). Then substitute the subject with a subject pronoun in parentheses. Continue by completing the rest of the sentence with a verb that agrees with the subject given. The first question has been completed for you.

1. ( **S** ) The computer **analyst (They) detect** a deadly virus \_\_\_\_\_.
2. (    ) Switzerland \_\_\_\_\_.
3. (    ) The knowledgeable students \_\_\_\_\_.
4. (    ) McDonald's restaurant \_\_\_\_\_.
5. (    ) The Beatles \_\_\_\_\_.
6. (    ) Oprah Winfrey \_\_\_\_\_.
7. (    ) Christopher Columbus and I \_\_\_\_\_.
8. (    ) The Rocky Mountains \_\_\_\_\_.
9. (    ) The high-tech digital cameras \_\_\_\_\_.
10. (    ) Marco Polo \_\_\_\_\_.