

The Writing Centre's Guide to Subject- Verb Agreement

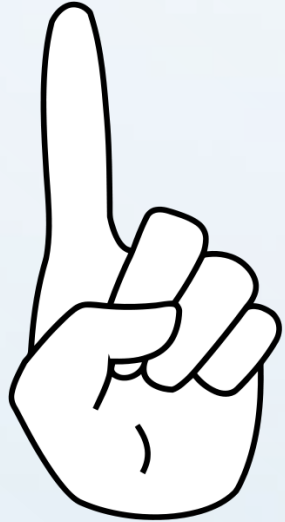
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Complete Sentences

- In every complete sentence there are two components.



The **subject**:

- A word or phrase in a sentence indicating who or what is performing/receiving the action of the verb



The **verb**:

- The word or group of words used to indicate the action or state.

Relationship between Subject and Verb

- The form of the verb indicates the action or state of the subject; therefore, the subject and verb have an important relationship.



- They must always agree in **number** (singular or plural).
- They must always agree in **person** (1st, 2nd, or 3rd).

Basic Rules of Agreement

Present Tense

- When the subject is singular, one -s or -es is added to the verb.
- When the subject is plural (more than one), nothing is added to the verb.
- Note: Although the addition of -s or -es to nouns indicates the plural form, adding them to verbs indicates a third person singular verb.

General Rule

Singular Subjects = add -s

Plural Subjects = no ending

Basic Rules of Agreement: Ex. 1

General Rule

Singular Subjects = add -s

Plural Subjects = no ending

Read this example:



The adventurous **girl hikes** to the top of Mount Everest.

- In this sentence, the subject, **girl**, is singular in number.
- Only one girl is hiking.
- In order for the subjects and verb to agree, the verb, **hikes**, has an -s ending to make it third person singular.

Basic Rules of Agreement: Ex. 2

General Rule

Singular Subjects = add -s

Plural Subjects = no ending

Read this example:



The adventurous **girls** **hike** to the top of Mount Everest.

- In this sentence, the subject, **girls**, is plural in number.
- There is more than one girl hiking.
- Since the subject is plural, the verb **hike** has no ending.

The adventurous **girl hikes** to the top of Mount Everest.

Subject = singular

Add -s to verb

The adventurous **girls hike** to the top of Mount Everest.

Subject = plural

Add nothing



Pronoun Agreement

- When a **pronoun** is the subject of a sentence, the pronoun must also agree with the **verb**.
- A way to check if they 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 use the chart below to choose the corresponding **subject pronoun**.

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

Irregular Plural Nouns

- One exception to the general rule of subject-verb agreement (SVA) is when the subject is an **irregular noun**.
- In the case of an irregular plural noun we do not need to add an -s on the verb, since it is still plural even though it doesn't have an -s ending on the noun.
- Some examples include **men**, **children**, and **mice**.
- Each of these nouns is pluralized by changing the root of the word.

Some Irregular Plural Nouns

Singular Subjects	Plural Subjects
Man	Men
Woman	Women
Child	Children
Mouse	Mice
Foot	Feet
Person	People
Tooth	Teeth
Deer	Deer
Half	Halves
Life	Lives
Crisis	Crises

Irregular Verbs

- The irregular verb *be* (am, is, are, was, were) and helping verbs (be, have, do) are made to agree with subjects as well.

