

# Subject-Verb Agreement

# Basic Idea

A singular subject requires a singular verb, and a plural subject requires a plural verb.

*Study the following information to learn the rules for subject-verb agreement. Certain words and sentence structures can cause confusion. Learn to recognize these situations so that the subjects and verbs in your writing are always in agreement.*

- When a prepositional phrase comes between the subject and the verb, it is easy to make mistakes in subject-verb agreement. Crossing out prepositional phrases will help you avoid errors and will help you remember this important rule:

**The subject of a verb is never found in a prepositional phrase.**

*The **popularity** ~~of some brands of athletic shoes~~ **makes** some people willing to pay high prices.*

*Note that the subject and verb are indicated with a different color, and the prepositional phrases have been crossed out.*

- Problems in subject-verb agreement can also occur when the subject is an **indefinite pronoun**, a pronoun that does not refer to a specific person or thing. The following indefinite pronouns are always singular and require singular verbs.

**The following indefinite pronouns are always singular and require singular verbs.**

<i>each</i>	<i>everybody</i>	<i>anyone</i>	<i>anything</i>
<i>either</i>	<i>somebody</i>	<i>everyone</i>	<i>everything</i>
<i>neither</i>	<i>nobody</i>	<i>someone</i>	<i>something</i>

*Each of the cupcakes has been decorated with the Texarkana College bulldog mascot.*

*The subject of this sentence is each, so it needs the singular verb has been decorated.*

➤ When the subject follows the verb, using the correct verb can be tricky. The subject of a sentence follows a verb in these situations:

1. When the sentence begins with *here* or *there*.
2. When the sentence begins with a prepositional phrase that is immediately followed by a verb.
3. When the sentence is a question.

*Continue to the next slide to see an example of each situation.*

1. *There are several tests this semester.*

The plural subject, *tests*, requires the plural verb *are*. The word *there* is not the subject of the sentence.

2. *In front of the classroom hang brightly colored posters.*

The prepositional phrases *in front* and *of the classroom* are immediately followed by a verb. Since the subject is never found in a prepositional phrase, it must be somewhere after the verb. The plural verb, *hang*, agrees with the plural subject, *posters*.

3. *What was the price of the textbook for this class?*

The singular subject, *price*, follows the singular verb, *was*.

- Compound subjects may also cause confusion in subject-verb agreement. The rules for subject-verb agreement with compound subjects on the following slides should help clear up this confusion.

- Compound subjects joined by *and*

Compound subjects joined by *and*  
require a **plural** verb.

*Winning modestly and losing gracefully are two ways of demonstrating good sportsmanship.*

The compound subject *winning and losing* requires the plural verb *are*.

*Discarded beer cans and cigarette butts dot the convenience store's parking lot.*

The compound subject *cans and butt* requires the plural verb *dot*.



- Compound subjects joined by *or*, *either/or*, or *neither/nor*

**When a compound subject is joined by *or*, *either/or*, or *neither/nor*, the verb agrees with the part of the subject that is closer to it.**

*David or his brother is opening the shop on Saturday morning.*

The compound subject *winning* and *losing* requires the plural verb *are*.

*Discarded beer cans and cigarette butts dot the convenience store's parking lot.*

The compound subject *cans* and *butt* requires the plural verb *dot*.