

## Subject-Verb Agreement

Verbs must agree with their subjects in number (singular or plural) and in person (first, second, or third). Usually, subject-verb agreement is fairly simple; only a few subject-verb constructions cause confusion.

### Verbs with third-person singular subjects

- A vegetarian diet *lowers* the risk of heart disease.

To make a verb in the present tense agree with any other subject, use the base form of the verb.

- I *miss* my family.
- They *live* in another state.

*Have* and *be* do not follow the *-s* or *-es* pattern with third-person singular subjects. *Have* changes to *has*; *be* has irregular forms in both present and past tenses and in the first person as well as the third person.

- War *is* hell.
- The soldier *was* brave beyond the call of duty.

### Subjects and verbs separated by other words

Make sure the verb agrees with the subject and not with another noun that falls in between.

- A vase of flowers *makes* a room more attractive.
- Many books on the best-seller list *has* little literary value. (*have*)  
(The simple subject is 'books', not 'list')
- The instructor, along with many students, *opposes* the idea.
- A passenger, as well as the driver, *were* injured in the accident. (*was*)

### Verbs with compound subjects

Two or more subjects joined by *and* generally require the plural verb form.

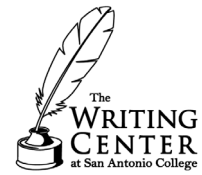
- Tony and his friend *commute* from Louisville.
- A dictionary, a coffee cup, and a bag *was* issued to each student. (*were*)
- George W. Bush's older brother and political ally *was* the governor of Florida.
- 'Drinking and driving' ~~*remain*~~ a major cause of highway deaths. (*remains*)
- Each boy and girl *chooses* one gift to take home.
- Neither my roommate nor my neighbors *like* my loud music.
- Either the witness or the defendant ~~*are*~~ lying. (*is*)

### Verbs with collective nouns

Collective nouns – such as family, team, audience, group, jury, crowd, band, class, and committee – refer to a group. These can take either singular or plural verb forms, depending on whether they refer to the group as a single unit or to the multiple members of the group.

- After deliberating, the jury *reports* its verdict.  
The jury acts as a single unit.
- The jury still *disagree* on a number of issues.  
The members of the jury act as multiple individuals.

### Verbs with fractions



Treat fractions that refer to singular nouns as singular, and those which refer to plural nouns as plural.

- Two-thirds of the park *has* burned.
- Two-thirds of the students *were* commuters.

### Verbs with indefinite-pronoun subjects

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to specific persons or things. Most take singular forms. Common indefinite pronouns:

Another	Each	Much	One
Any	Either	Neither	Other
Anybody	Everybody	Nobody	Somebody
Anyone	Everyone	No one	Someone
Anything	Everything	Nothing	Something

- Of the two jobs, neither *holds* much appeal.
- Each of the plays *depicts* a hero undone by a tragic flaw.

### Verbs with antecedents of *who*, *which* and *that*

When the relative pronouns *who*, *which*, and *that* are used as a subject, the verb agrees with the antecedent of the pronoun.

- Fear is an ingredient that *goes* into creating stereotypes.
- Guilt and fear are ingredients that *go* into creating stereotypes.
- Carla is one of the employees who always *work* overtime.
- Ming is the only one of the employees who always *works* overtime.

### Linking verbs and their subjects

A linking verb should agree with its subject, which usually precedes the verb, not with the subject complement, which follows it.

- Three key treaties *are* the topic of my talk.
- Nero Wolfe's passion *was* orchids.

### Verbs with singular subjects ending in -s

Some words that end in *-s* appear plural but are singular and thus take singular verb forms.

- Measles still *strikes* many Americans.

### Verbs that appear before subjects

Verbs usually follow subjects. When this order is reversed, make the verb agree with the subject, not with a noun that happens to precede it.

Beside the barn stand silos filled with grain.