

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Subjects and verbs must agree in number and in person.

Example:

The coat is on the rack.

The airplanes are flying high.

Alan's parents are good people.

Roger is a strange guy.

CONVENTIONAL VERBS

Notice how the concept of number affects the subject-verb relationship:

Example:

Singular -

I jump

You jump

He/She/It jumps

Plural -

We jump

You jump

They jump

Singular

Plural

First-Person

I jump

We Jump

Second-Person

You jump

You (all) jump

Third-Person

He/She/It Jumps

They Jump

Notice how with a verb only changes form with the third-person.

Third-person references such as He/She/It or the actual names of singular entities (e.g., George, Marcia, Brent, Rover, Buffy, etc) count as the third person singular as well.

Therefore:

I jump. But, Carl jumps.

I teach the class. But, Carl teaches the class.

I ride the bike. But, Carl rides the bike.

Conversely, if the third-person reference or the actual names of the entities are plural (containing more than one person), then the verb is singular:

I jump. But, Brad and Jennifer jump.

I teach this class. But, Brad and Jennifer teach that class

I ride the bike. But, Brad and Jennifer ride the bike too.

"STATE OF BEING" VERBS AND NOUN AGREEMENT

When a verb indicates a "state of being" such as words from the infinitive "to be" (e.g., is, are, am, was, were, etc.), then you must proceed much more carefully.

Example:

Singular -

I am

You are

He/She/It are

Plural -

We are

You are

They are

Singular

Plural

First-Person

I am/was

We are/were

Second-Person

You are/were

You (all) are/were

Third-Person

He/She/It is/was

They are/were

Notice how some of the singular/plural relationships change.

Third-Person entities use singular verbs instead of plural verbs (as you might find with other verbs).

WORDS BETWEEN SUBJECT AND VERB

Words appearing between the subject and the verb should not interfere with their agreement.

Example:

The movie star in his ability to seek fans put on a massive exhibition.

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS AND VERB AGREEMENT

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to specific persons, places, or things. Therefore, they require an appropriate singular/plural form of the verb.

Example: (Indefinite Pronouns + "State of Being" Verbs)

Anyone is/was welcome (Singular Indefinite).

All are/were welcome (Plural Indefinite).

Example: (Indefinite Pronouns + Conventional Verbs)

Anyone passes into the pearly gates. (Singular Indefinite)

All pass into the pearly gates. (Plural Indefinite)

COMMON INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

(Singular)

Anybody

Anyone

Anything

Each

Either

Everybody

Everyone

Everything

Much

Neither

Nobody

None

No One

Nothing

One Somebody

Something

(Plural)

All

Any

More

Most

Some

Both

Few

Many

Several

COLLECTIVE NOUNS

Maintaining agreement with collective nouns (singular nouns appearing plural by connotation) can be difficult as well.

Example:

The family is filled with joy. [Singular Collective]

The families are filled with joy. [Plural Collective]

The group is tired. [Singular Collective]

The groups are tired. [Plural Collective]

Some grammar textbooks suggest that collective nouns may be used interchangeably.

Example:

The faculty is responsible for their own transportation

Faculty is responsible for their own transportation.

The faculty are responsible for their own transportation.

Faculty are responsible for their own transportation.