

# grammar subject verb agreement worksheet

The foundation of clear and effective communication in English lies in mastering fundamental grammatical concepts, and few are as crucial as subject-verb agreement. Understanding how subjects and verbs must align in number is essential for constructing grammatically sound sentences. This comprehensive guide and the accompanying grammar subject verb agreement worksheet are designed to demystify this often-challenging area of English grammar. We will explore the core principles, delve into common pitfalls and exceptions, and provide practical strategies for improvement. Whether you're a student grappling with this concept for the first time or a seasoned writer looking to polish your skills, this resource will equip you with the knowledge and practice needed to ensure your verbs always agree with their subjects. Get ready to build stronger sentences and communicate with greater confidence!

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## Understanding the Basics of Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is a fundamental rule in English grammar that dictates that a verb must agree in number with its subject. In simple terms, if the subject is singular, the verb must be singular, and if the subject is plural, the verb must be plural. This agreement ensures that sentences are grammatically correct and convey a clear meaning. For instance, "The dog barks" is correct because "dog" is singular and "barks" is the singular form of the verb. Conversely, "The dogs bark" is correct because "dogs" is plural and "bark" is the plural form of the verb.

The core principle is straightforward: a single subject requires a single verb, and a compound or plural subject requires a plural verb. While this seems simple, many common errors arise from misidentifying the subject or overlooking exceptions to the rule. Mastering this concept involves not only understanding the basic rule but also recognizing the nuances that can complicate agreement, particularly with compound subjects, indefinite pronouns, and intervening phrases.

## **Common Subject-Verb Agreement Rules**

Several common rules govern subject-verb agreement in English. Adhering to these guidelines is key to writing accurate sentences. Let's break down some of the most frequently encountered scenarios.

### **Singular Subjects with Singular Verbs**

The most basic rule states that a singular subject takes a singular verb. Singular subjects are typically nouns that refer to one person, place, thing, or idea. The singular form of most verbs in the present tense ends in "-s" or "-es". For example, "She walks," "He sings," "It rains," and "The student learns" all demonstrate correct singular subject-verb agreement.

### **Plural Subjects with Plural Verbs**

Conversely, plural subjects require plural verbs. Plural subjects refer to more than one person, place, thing, or idea. In the present tense, plural subjects typically use the base form of the verb, without the "-s" ending. Examples include "They walk," "We sing," "The children play," and "The books sit on the shelf."

### **Compound Subjects Joined by "and"**

When two or more subjects are joined by the conjunction "and," they are considered plural and require a plural verb, regardless of whether the individual subjects are singular or plural. For example, "John and Mary are going to the party." Even if the subjects refer to a single entity or concept, if they are joined by "and," they typically take a plural verb: "The hammer and sickle symbolizes a political movement."

### **Compound Subjects Joined by "or" or "nor"**

When compound subjects are joined by "or" or "nor," the verb agrees with the subject that is closer to it. This is often referred to as the "proximity

rule." For instance, "Either the cat or the dogs are responsible for the mess." Here, "dogs" is plural and closer to the verb "are," so the plural verb is used. In contrast, "Either the dogs or the cat is responsible for the mess." Now, "cat" is singular and closer to the verb "is," making the singular verb correct.

## Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns are words that refer to non-specific people, places, or things. Many indefinite pronouns are always singular, while others are always plural, and some can be singular or plural depending on the context. It's crucial to know which category an indefinite pronoun falls into.

- **Always Singular:** These include words like "each," "either," "neither," "every," "any," "some," "none," "all," "most," "more," "one," "nobody," "someone," "everybody," "anybody," "no one," "nothing," "something," "everything." For example, "Everyone is invited to the event." "Neither of the books is interesting."
- **Always Plural:** These include "both," "few," "many," "several." For example, "Both of the students are presenting their projects." "Many attend the conference."
- **Singular or Plural Depending on Context:** These include "all," "any," "more," "most," "none," "some." The agreement depends on the noun the pronoun refers to (the antecedent). If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun takes a singular verb. If the antecedent is plural, the pronoun takes a plural verb. For example, "Some of the water is in the bottle" (water is singular). "Some of the bottles are empty" (bottles is plural).

## Collective Nouns

Collective nouns represent a group of people or things. These nouns can be tricky because they can be treated as singular or plural depending on whether the group is acting as a single unit or as individuals. Common collective nouns include "team," "family," "committee," "class," "government," "audience," and "staff."

When the collective noun acts as a single unit, it takes a singular verb. For instance, "The team is playing well tonight." Here, the team is functioning as one unit. However, when the individuals within the group are acting independently, the collective noun takes a plural verb. For example, "The committee are divided in their opinions." In this case, the members of the committee are acting as individuals.

## **Subjects Preceded by Phrases like "one of," "each of," "every one of"**

When a singular subject is followed by a prepositional phrase that begins with "one of," "each of," or "every one of," the verb should agree with the singular subject, which is "one." For example, "One of the students is absent." The subject is "one," not "students." Similarly, "Each of the participants has a name tag."

## **Subjects Following "there is" or "there are"**

The words "there is" and "there are" are often used to begin sentences. In these constructions, "there" is not the subject. The true subject follows the verb. Therefore, you use "there is" with a singular subject and "there are" with a plural subject. For example, "There is a book on the table." "There are books on the table."

## **Subjects That Are Titles or Proper Nouns**

Titles of books, movies, songs, or other creative works, as well as proper nouns that appear plural but refer to a single entity, always take singular verbs. For example, "The Grapes of Wrath is a classic novel." "United States is a large country."

## **Tricky Situations in Subject-Verb Agreement**

Beyond the common rules, several more complex scenarios can challenge subject-verb agreement. Understanding these nuances is crucial for achieving grammatical accuracy.

## **Intervening Phrases and Clauses**

Prepositional phrases and relative clauses that come between the subject and the verb can be particularly confusing. The verb should always agree with the true subject, not with any noun within an intervening phrase or clause. For instance, in the sentence "The box of chocolates is on the table," the subject is "box" (singular), not "chocolates" (plural). Therefore, the singular verb "is" is correct. Similarly, "The students who completed the assignment are eligible for extra credit." The subject is "students" (plural), and the relative clause "who completed the assignment" doesn't change the number of the subject.

## Subjects That Look Plural but Are Singular

Some nouns look plural because they end in "-s" but are actually singular. These include certain academic subjects (mathematics, physics, economics), diseases (measles, mumps), and some names of countries or organizations (the Netherlands, the Philippines). These nouns take singular verbs. For example, "Mathematics is my favorite subject." "Measles is a contagious disease."

## Subjects That Look Singular but Are Plural

Conversely, some nouns appear singular but are inherently plural and require plural verbs. Examples include "cattle," "poultry," "people," and "police." For instance, "The cattle are grazing in the field." "The police are investigating the incident."

## "Who," "Which," and "That" as Relative Pronouns

The agreement of verbs with relative pronouns like "who," "which," and "that" depends on the antecedent they refer to.

- If the relative pronoun refers to a singular antecedent, it takes a singular verb. Example: "This is the student who studies diligently."
- If the relative pronoun refers to a plural antecedent, it takes a plural verb. Example: "These are the students who study diligently."

When the relative pronoun follows a phrase like "one of the," the verb agrees with the plural noun that follows "of." For example, "She is one of the teachers who assign a lot of homework." The pronoun "who" refers to "teachers" (plural), so the plural verb "assign" is correct.

## Sentences with Inverted Order

In sentences where the verb comes before the subject (common in questions or sentences starting with "here" or "there"), identifying the subject correctly is crucial. For example, in the question, "Where are the keys?" the subject is "keys" (plural), so the plural verb "are" is used. In sentences starting with "here" or "there," the subject follows the verb, as discussed earlier: "Here is the report." "Here are the reports."

## Using a Grammar Subject Verb Agreement Worksheet for Practice

The most effective way to solidify your understanding of subject-verb agreement is through consistent practice. A well-designed grammar subject verb agreement worksheet provides targeted exercises that reinforce the rules and help you identify areas where you might need more attention.

## Benefits of Using Worksheets

Grammar subject verb agreement worksheets offer several advantages for learners:

- **Targeted Practice:** Worksheets can focus on specific rules or types of challenging sentences, allowing for focused skill development.
- **Immediate Feedback:** Many worksheets include answer keys, providing instant feedback on your accuracy. This allows for self-correction and reinforces learning.
- **Skill Reinforcement:** Repeatedly applying the rules in different contexts helps to internalize them, making correct agreement more automatic.
- **Identification of Weaknesses:** By analyzing the types of errors you make on a worksheet, you can pinpoint specific areas of confusion and dedicate more study time to them.
- **Building Confidence:** Successfully completing exercises and seeing improvement can significantly boost your confidence in your grammar abilities.

## What to Look for in a Worksheet

When selecting a grammar subject verb agreement worksheet, consider these features:

- **Variety of Sentence Structures:** Look for worksheets that include simple sentences, complex sentences, questions, and sentences with intervening phrases.
- **Coverage of Common Exceptions:** Ensure the worksheet addresses common tricky areas like indefinite pronouns, collective nouns, and compound subjects.
- **Clear Instructions:** The instructions should be easy to understand, guiding you on how to complete the exercises.
- **Answer Key:** An answer key is essential for self-assessment and learning from mistakes.

- **Appropriate Difficulty Level:** Choose worksheets that match your current skill level, offering a challenge without being overwhelmingly difficult.

Engaging with a grammar subject verb agreement worksheet is an active learning process. It's not just about filling in blanks; it's about consciously applying the rules and understanding the reasoning behind each correct answer.

## **Tips for Improving Subject-Verb Agreement Skills**

Beyond working through a grammar subject verb agreement worksheet, several strategies can help you consistently improve your subject-verb agreement skills.

### **Read Widely and Actively**

Pay attention to how writers use subject-verb agreement in published works. As you read, consciously notice the relationship between subjects and verbs, especially in complex sentences. Active reading means not just absorbing the story but also observing the craft of writing.

### **Identify the True Subject**

When in doubt, isolate the subject of the sentence. Ignore any prepositional phrases or clauses that come between the subject and the verb. Ask yourself, "Who or what is performing the action or being described?" Once you've identified the true subject, determine if it's singular or plural, and then choose the appropriate verb form.

### **Practice Speaking and Listening**

While writing is where errors are often most apparent, practicing subject-verb agreement in spoken English can also be beneficial. Listen to how native speakers construct sentences and try to mimic their correct usage. Speaking aloud can help you "hear" when something sounds incorrect.

### **Break Down Complex Sentences**

Long, complex sentences can make it difficult to track subject-verb

agreement. Practice breaking these sentences down into their core components: the subject and the main verb. This simplification can make the agreement clearer.

## **Review the Rules Regularly**

Don't just study the rules once; revisit them periodically. Keep a quick reference guide of common exceptions and tricky situations handy. Regular review will reinforce your knowledge and prevent your skills from fading.

## **Proofread Specifically for Agreement**

When you proofread your work, dedicate a specific pass to checking only for subject-verb agreement errors. This focused approach increases the likelihood of catching mistakes that might be overlooked during a general read-through.

## **Conclusion: Mastering Subject-Verb Agreement**

Mastering subject-verb agreement is a cornerstone of effective written communication. By understanding the fundamental principle that subjects and verbs must agree in number, and by diligently practicing with resources like a grammar subject verb agreement worksheet, you can significantly enhance the clarity and correctness of your writing. We've explored the common rules, from singular and plural subjects to the intricacies of compound subjects joined by "or" and "nor." We also delved into challenging scenarios involving indefinite pronouns, collective nouns, intervening phrases, and relative pronouns, all of which require careful attention to ensure proper agreement. By actively reading, consciously identifying true subjects, and regularly reviewing the rules, you can build unwavering confidence in your ability to construct grammatically sound sentences. Consistent practice and a focused approach are your most powerful allies in achieving mastery of subject-verb agreement, leading to more polished and impactful communication.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the most common mistake students make with subject-verb agreement?**

The most common mistake is not correctly identifying the true subject of the sentence, especially when there are prepositional phrases or other modifying words between the subject and the verb.

## **How do indefinite pronouns affect subject-verb agreement?**

Indefinite pronouns like 'everyone,' 'nobody,' 'each,' and 'either' are typically singular and take singular verbs, regardless of the plural nouns they might refer to (e.g., 'Everyone in the rooms is sleeping').

## **When do compound subjects joined by 'and' take a plural verb?**

Compound subjects joined by 'and' usually take a plural verb because they represent two or more separate entities (e.g., 'The dog and the cat are playing').

## **What happens to subject-verb agreement when the subject is joined by 'or' or 'nor'?**

When subjects are joined by 'or' or 'nor,' the verb agrees with the subject that is closer to it (e.g., 'Neither the students nor the teacher knows the answer,' but 'Neither the teacher nor the students know the answer').

## **How should collective nouns be treated for subject-verb agreement?**

Collective nouns like 'team,' 'family,' or 'committee' can be treated as singular if they are acting as a single unit, or as plural if the individual members are acting separately. The context of the sentence is key (e.g., 'The team is winning' vs. 'The team are arguing about the strategy').

## **What's a good strategy for dealing with sentences where the subject comes after the verb?**

Look for introductory phrases like 'There is' or 'Here are.' The true subject will follow the verb. For example, in 'There are two books on the table,' 'books' is the subject, so 'are' (plural) is used.

## **How do relative pronouns like 'who,' 'which,' and 'that' impact subject-verb agreement?**

The verb following a relative pronoun must agree with its antecedent (the noun or pronoun it refers to). If the antecedent is singular, use a singular verb; if plural, use a plural verb (e.g., 'This is the book that explains everything' vs. 'These are the books that explain everything').

# Why is practicing subject-verb agreement important for writers?

Correct subject-verb agreement is crucial for clarity and professionalism in writing. It demonstrates attention to detail and helps prevent misinterpretation by the reader.

## Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to grammar and subject-verb agreement, with descriptions:

1. The Little Book of Grammar Rules: Master Subject-Verb Agreement  
This concise guide breaks down the often-tricky concept of subject-verb agreement into easy-to-understand principles. It offers clear explanations, illustrative examples, and practical tips for achieving accuracy in your writing. Perfect for students and writers who want to solidify their understanding of this fundamental grammatical concept.
2. Grammar Gym: Subject-Verb Agreement Drills and Exercises  
Engage your grammar muscles with this collection of targeted exercises designed to improve subject-verb agreement skills. From simple sentences to complex clauses, this book provides ample practice opportunities. It's an ideal resource for reinforcing learning and building confidence in grammatical correctness.
3. Clear Sentences, Strong Verbs: A Subject-Verb Agreement Workbook  
Focus on the crucial relationship between subjects and verbs with this hands-on workbook. It systematically addresses common errors and challenging scenarios in subject-verb agreement. Through engaging activities, readers will develop a keen eye for ensuring their verbs correctly match their subjects.
4. Grammar Essentials: Subject-Verb Agreement Made Easy  
This accessible guide demystifies subject-verb agreement for learners of all levels. It provides a straightforward approach to understanding agreement rules, including exceptions and tricky cases. The book's clear explanations and abundant examples make mastering this core grammar skill achievable and stress-free.
5. The Subject-Verb Agreement Survival Guide  
Don't let subject-verb agreement cause you grammatical anxiety! This practical guide offers immediate solutions and ongoing support for achieving accuracy. It covers a wide range of common pitfalls and provides effective strategies for overcoming them, ensuring your writing is grammatically sound.
6. Verb Vibes: Achieving Perfect Subject-Verb Harmony  
Discover the rhythm and flow of correct grammar with this engaging book focused on subject-verb agreement. It presents the principles in a lively and

memorable way, making learning enjoyable. Through creative examples and practice exercises, you'll master the art of harmonious subject-verb relationships.

#### 7. Sentence Structure Secrets: Mastering Subject-Verb Agreement

Unlock the power of precise sentence construction by understanding the intricacies of subject-verb agreement. This book delves into how correct agreement contributes to clarity and impact in writing. It provides advanced techniques and strategies for tackling complex sentence structures with confidence.

#### 8. Grammar Guru: Your Comprehensive Subject-Verb Agreement Resource

Become a grammar expert with this all-encompassing resource dedicated to subject-verb agreement. It offers in-depth explanations, a wealth of examples, and numerous practice opportunities to solidify your understanding. This book is designed to be a go-to reference for anyone serious about mastering grammatical accuracy.

#### 9. The Agreement Advantage: Polishing Your Writing with Subject-Verb Precision

Gain a distinct advantage in your writing by achieving flawless subject-verb agreement. This book focuses on the practical application of agreement rules to enhance the professionalism and clarity of your work. It provides the tools and knowledge to eliminate errors and elevate your written communication.

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