

## Making Subjects and Verbs Agree

When writing a sentence, the subjects and verbs must agree; therefore, singular subjects require singular verbs and plural subjects require plural verbs. This handout provides tips for recognizing when subjects and verbs agree in a sentence.

- 1.) Use a plural verb when the subject of a sentence is comprised of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by *and*.



**The pen and the pencil are on the table.**

- 2.) When two or more singular nouns or pronouns are connected by *or* or *nor*, use a singular verb.



**Either Mary or Bill is working today.**

- 3.) When a compound subject has both a singular and a plural noun or pronoun that is joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is closest to the verb.



**The cat or the dogs jump on the kitchen counter.**



**The dogs or the cat jumps on the kitchen counter.**

- 4.) *Does not* and its contraction form *doesn't* should only be used with a singular subject. *Don't*, a contraction of *do not*, should only be used with a plural subject; however, when using the first and second person pronouns *I* and *you*, *don't* should be used.



**She doesn't know where the dog went.**




**They don't know where the dog went.**

- 5.) The verb will always agree with the subject, even if a phrase separates the subject and the verb.

  
**One of the cats is outside.**

  
**The people in the store are pretty angry.**

  
**The manager, as well as her staff, is nice.**

  
**The paragraph, including the final sentences, is compelling.**

  
**The woman with all the grocery bags lives in my neighborhood.**

- 6.) Indefinite pronouns such as *each*, *either*, *neither*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *anybody*, *anyone*, *nobody*, *somebody*, *someone*, and *no one* are singular and require a singular verb.

  
**Everyone needs a friend.**


  
**No one has a book yet.**


  
**Neither dog is inside the house.**

- 7.) Nouns such as *civics*, *mathematics*, *dollars*, *measles*, and *news* require singular verbs.

  
**The news is on at eight.**

Note: When talking about an amount of money, dollars requires a singular verb; however, when referring to dollars generically, use a plural verb.

  
**Twenty dollars buys a pizza.**

  
**Dollars are worth more in some countries than others.**


- 8.) Plural verbs are required for nouns such as *scissors*, *tweezers*, *trousers*, and *shears*.

  
**The scissors are sharp.**

  
**The tweezers are in the drawer.**

- 9.) The subject will follow the verb in a sentence beginning with *there is* or *there are*, and the verb will agree with the subject that follows it.

  
**There are many pencils on the desk.**

  
**There is a pencil on the desk.**

- 10.) Collective nouns such as *family*, *group*, *team*, and *committee*, as well as collective nouns that do not describe people such as *ice cream*, *forest*, and *money* are considered singular nouns. Therefore, these nouns require a singular verb.

  
**All of the money is on the table.**

  
**The team wins every game.**

  
**The committee meets on Fridays.**

- 11.) Expressions such as *with*, *together with*, *including*, *in addition*, or *as well* do not change a subject from singular to plural. If the subject is singular, it will require a singular verb.

  
**The little girl, together with her dog, sells homemade lemonade for five cents.**

  
**The book, including the appendix, is over four hundred pages long.**