

MAKING SUBJECTS, VERBS, AND PRONOUNS AGREE

All parts of a sentence should agree. In general, if the subject is singular, the verb should be singular; if the subject is plural, the verb should be plural. Notice that the third person singular, present tense verb form ends in "s" while the plural form does not end in "s."

Each of the boys **has** his own room.
Both of the boys **have** their own room.
Jennifer and Matthew have a good friendship.
He and I were there.
 There **were** two **places** at the long table.

The following words are always singular by rule and take a singular verb:

(-one words)	(-body words)	(others)
one	nobody	each
anyone	anybody	either
someone	somebody	neither
everyone	everybody	

One of my friends **is** a freshman.
Each of the students **is** responsible for one report.
Either of the girls **is** a good choice.

The following "group" words take a singular verb if you are thinking of the group as a whole, but they take a plural verb if you are thinking of the individuals in the group:

group	hand	heap
committee	flock	lot
crowd	class	audience
team	dozen	jury
family	kind	herd
number	public	

As a group:

My family **is** behind me.
 The number **present** was small.
 A dozen **is** enough.
 A lot **was** accomplished.

As individuals:

My family **are** all scattered.
 A number **are** going to the rally.
 A dozen **are** going.
 A lot **were** late to class.

Here are some subject-verb pairs you can always be sure of. No Exceptions!

you were	(never "you was")
we were	(never "we was")
they were	(never "they was")
he doesn't	(never "he don't")
she doesn't	(never "she don't")
it doesn't	(never "it don't")

Not only should subject and verb agree, but a pronoun also should agree with the noun it refers to; if that noun is singular, the pronoun should be singular; if that noun is plural, the pronoun should be plural.

Each of the boys has **his** own room.

The pronoun **his** refers to the singular subject **Each** and, therefore, is singular.

Both of the boys have **their** own rooms.

The pronoun **their** refers to the plural subject **Both** and, therefore, is plural.

Today many people write **he or she** and **him or her** in an attempt to avoid gender bias or sexist language, but such writing can be awkward and wordy.

A good way to avoid the awkward he or she and him or her is to make the antecedents plural.

Instead of writing:

Each of the students was in **his or her** place.

write:

All of the students were in **their** places.

thus avoiding sexist language and still having a grammatically correct sentence.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

Underline the subject with a single line. Then circle the correct verb. In some sentences you will also need to circle the correct pronoun. Use the correct grammatical form even though an alternate form may be acceptable in conversation. Check your answers ten at a time.

EXERCISE I

1. Nobody in our family (are is) going away this summer.
2. Donna and Wendy (was were) in the country for the weekend.
3. A number of us (are is) going on a bus trip to Mesa, AZ, next week.
4. There (was were) 30 people on the last trip we took.
5. Most of my friends (have has) traveled more than I have.
6. One of my friends (has have) just come back from Kansas City.
7. Another one of my friends (go goes) to college in High Point, NC.
8. I never knew you (was were) from Moorpark.
9. I'll bet they (was were) glad to see you out there.
10. We (was were) wondering whether you'd get back today.

EXERCISE II

1. Each of these chapters (present presents) an important rule.
2. All of the exercises (help helps) one to apply the rule.
3. It (doesn't don't) do any good to learn a rule if you don't practice it.
4. You (was were) planning to do all the exercises; (wasn't weren't) you?
5. It (doesn't don't) matter to me whether I write beautifully; I just want to write clearly.
6. Only one of the members of the class (has have) finished today's paper.
7. Everybody in the class (are is) looking forward to hearing the papers read aloud.
8. One of my goals (has have) always been to have a college degree.
9. Everyone in the family (are is) behind me.
10. On my study table (stand stands) my typewriter and my books.

EXERCISE III

1. There (are is) two doctors and a dentist in that building.
2. Across the street (are is) a pharmacy and a clinic.
3. Behind the building (is are) a hotel and a cafe.
4. You (was were) here first.
5. It (doesn't don't) matter; go ahead.
6. The reason we (was were) late was that the sitter didn't come on time.
7. The sitter (doesn't don't) worry much about punctuality.
8. Two of my absences from class (was were) because of my trip to Alabama.
9. You (was were) absent several days too; (wasn't weren't) you?
10. It's too bad we (was were) absent for the panel discussions.

EXERCISE IV

1. Each of Cheryl's brothers (are is) making something for her birthday.
2. Each of them (has have) been spending (his their) spare time on (his their) project.
3. There (are is) three kinds of dessert in the refrigerator.
4. Both of the boys (seem seems) too busy to think about eating though.
5. Each of them (need needs) more time for (his their) project.
6. You (was were) at the play last night; (wasn't weren't) you?
7. There (was were) many elaborate stage sets.
8. All of the characters (was were) well cast.
9. A couple of the main characters (hope hopes) to make a career of acting.
10. Each of them (hope hopes) to play on Broadway.

PRACTICE EXERCISE ANSWERS**EXERCISE I**

1. Nobody--is
2. Donna, Wendy--were
3. number--are
4. people--were
5. Most--have
6. One--has
7. one--goes
8. you--were
9. they--were
10. We--were

EXERCISE II

1. Each--presents
2. All—help
3. It--doesn't
4. You--were--weren't
5. It--doesn't
6. one--has
7. Everybody--is
8. One--has
9. Everyone—is
10. typewriter, books--stand

EXERCISE III

1. doctors, dentist--are
2. pharmacy, clinic,--are
3. hotel, cafe--are
4. You--were
5. It--doesn't
6. we--were
7. sitter--doesn't
8. Two--were
9. You--were--weren't
10. we--were

EXERCISE IV

1. Each--is
2. Each--has--his--his
3. kinds--are
4. Both--seem
5. Each--needs--his
6. You--were--weren't
7. sets--were
8. All--were
9. couple--hope
10. Each--hopes