



WRITING CENTER

• Cullom-Davis Library 311/312 • 309-677-3254 • bradley.edu/writeright •

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-Verb Agreement refers to the fact that singular subjects go with singular verbs and plural subjects go with plural verbs. Examples are listed below.

1. When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by **and**, use a plural verb.

She and **her friends** **are** at the mall.

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

The book or **the folder** **is** in the drawer.

3. When a compound subject contains both a singular and a plural noun or pronoun joined by **or** or **nor**, the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is *nearer* the verb.

The boy or **his friends** **run** every day.

His friends or **the boy** **runs** every day.

4. **Doesn't** is a contraction of **does not** and should be used only with a *singular* subject. **Don't** is a contraction of **do not** and should be used only with a *plural* subject. The exception to this rule appears in the case of the first person and second person pronouns **I** and **you**. With these pronouns, the contraction "**don't**" should be used.

He doesn't **like** broccoli.

They don't **like** broccoli.

5. Do not be misled by a phrase that comes between the subject and the verb. The verb agrees with the *subject*, not with a noun or pronoun in the phrase.

One of the boxes **is** open.

The people who listen to that music **are** few.

The team captain, as well as his players, **is** anxious.

The woman with all the dogs **walks** down my street.

6. The words each, each one, either, neither, everyone, everybody, anybody, anyone, nobody, somebody, someone, and no one are *singular* and require a singular verb.

Each of these hot dogs **is** juicy.
Everybody **knows** Mr. Jones.
Either **is** correct.

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

The news **is** on at six.

Note: The word **dollars** is a special case. When talking about an amount of money, it requires a singular verb, but when referring to the dollars themselves, a plural verb is required.

Five dollars **is** a lot of money.
Dollars **are** often used instead of rubles in Russia.

8. Nouns such as scissors, tweezers, trousers, and shears require *plural* verbs. (There are two parts to these things.)

These scissors **are** dull.
Those trousers **are** made of wool.

9. In sentences beginning with "there is" or "there are," the subject follows the verb. Since "there" is not the subject, the verb agrees with what follows.

There **are** many questions.
There **is** a question.

10. Collective nouns are words that imply more than one person but that are considered *singular* and take a singular verb, such as group, team, committee, class, and family.

The team **runs** during practice.
The committee **decides** how to proceed.
The family **has** a long history.
The crew **is preparing** to dock the ship.

11. Expressions such as with, together with, including, accompanied by, in addition to, or as well do not change the number of the subject. If the subject is singular, the verb is too.

The President, accompanied by his wife, **is** traveling to Indonesia.
All of the books, including yours, **are** on that shelf.

Still unsure about subject-verb agreement?
Make an appointment with the Writing Center!
Library, Room 311/312
www.bradley.edu/writeright