

Grammar Handout 122

Hints for Subject-Verb Agreement

I. Cross out all prepositional phrases.

Watch out especially for prepositional phrases beginning with of or in.

Examples: Every one ~~of the students~~ (try, tries) hard.
The windows ~~in the house~~ (stick, sticks) easily.

Cross out word groups within commas.

Word groups between commas often begin with:

, as well as ...,	, in addition to ...,
, with ...,	, including...
, along with ...,	

Examples: The doctor, ~~as well as the nurses~~, (work, works) hard.
The girls, ~~along with their dogs~~, (walk, walks) daily.

Cross out word groups beginning with *either...or...* and *neither...nor*.

Examples: ~~Either the vase or the dish~~ (was, were) a gift.
~~Neither the teacher nor~~ his students (was, were) here.

II. Find the subject

(Remember, the subject cannot be one of the words that you crossed out in Number I.)

Examples: Every one ~~of the students~~ (work, works) hard.
The girls, ~~along with their dogs~~ (walk, walks) daily.
~~Either the vase or the dish~~ (was, were) a gift.

III. Select the verb:

(A) If the subject is singular, choose the verb ending in **s**.

Examples: Every one of the students (try, tries) hard.

The doctor, as well as the nurses, (work, works) hard.

(B) If the subject is plural, choose the verb ending without the s.

Examples: The windows in the house (stick, sticks) easily.

The girls, along with their dogs, (walk, walks) daily.

(C) If two subjects are joined by *or* or by *nor*, the verb usually agrees with the nearer subject.

Examples: Either the vase or the dish (was, were) a gift.

Neither the teacher nor his students (was, were) present.

(D) If two subjects are joined by *and*, the verb is automatically plural (except for situations where the two words denote a single subject like “macaroni and cheese”).

Examples: The vase and the dish (was, were) gifts.

Subject/Verb Agreement

Directions: Write the verb that agrees in number with its subject.

1. We (*was, were*) the first to arrive.
2. My father (*doesn't, don't*) care for fishing.
3. Either Ralph or Terry (*have, has*) your keys.
4. The noise of the explosions (*was, were*) heard in the next town.
5. One of the stories (*is, are*) about a fight with an octopus.
6. (*Don't, Doesn't*) one of your friends live in Hollywood?
7. A school and a library (*are, is*) close to our home.
8. One of these pictures (*show, shows*) our cottage.
9. How much (*is, are*) the sugared doughnuts?
10. The furnishings of the room (*look, looks*) shabby.

11. Only one of these books (*contains, contain*) the information.
12. A little lemon juice or vanilla (*improve, improves*) the flavor.
13. One of these faucets (*doesn't, don't*) work.
14. The coach and the referee (*were, was*) discussing the play.
15. There (*was, were*) dozens of people around the car.
16. At that time his two brothers (*were, was*) in the army.
17. (*Where's, Where are*) the cookies I brought home?
18. There (*was, were*) too many people for such a small boat.
19. This new rule (*doesn't, don't*) seem fair to me.
20. The spelling of these words (*are, is*) tricky.
21. The motor and the body (*is, are*) in good condition.
22. An apple or a sandwich (*satisfies, satisfy*) my hunger.
23. The speed of these jets (*is, are*) unbelievable.
24. This title (*don't, doesn't*) sound interesting.
25. One of these envelopes (*contains, contain*) the lucky number.