

## GRAMMAR REVIEW PACKET 6

# SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

All nouns and pronouns have number. They are singular in number if they refer to one thing. They are plural in number if they refer to more than one thing.

- A. When a word refers to one person or thing, it is singular in number. When a word refers to more than one, it is plural in number.

*Examples:* hat, I, sky, principle (singular)  
hats, we, skies, principles (plural)

- B. A verb agrees with its subject in number.

Two words agree when they have the same number. The number of the verb must always agree with the number of its subject.

*Examples:* He fights. (singular subject and singular verb)  
Animals fight. (plural subject and plural verb)

- I. Singular subjects take singular verbs.

*Examples:* The lightning fills the sky.  
(The verb **fills** is singular to agree with the singular subject **lightning**.)  
Linda begins her vacation today.  
(The verb **begins** is singular to agree with the singular subject **Linda**.)

- II. Plural subjects take plural verbs.

*Examples:* Cheetahs run faster than most other animals.  
(The verb **run** is plural to agree with the plural subject **cheetahs**.)  
New families move into our neighborhood frequently.  
(The verb **move** is plural to agree with the plural subject **families**.)

\*\*\* Notice that an -s ending is often a sign of the singular in the verb.

*Examples:* He screams. Everyone sings.

NOTE - When a sentence contains a verb phrase, it is the helping verb that agrees with the subject.

*Examples:* The motor is running.  
The motors are running.

*Examples:* The girl has been sick.  
The girls have been sick.

## Hints for Subject-Verb Agreement

### I. (A) Cross out all prepositional phrases.

*Examples:* Every one ~~of the students~~ try/tries hard.  
The windows ~~in the house~~ stick/sticks easily.

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

### (B) Cross out word groups within commas.

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

Word groups between commas often begin with:

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

### II. Find the subject: (Remember, the subject cannot be one of the words that you crossed out in number I.)

*Examples:* Every [one] <sup>subject</sup> ~~of the students~~ work/works hard.  
The [girls], <sup>subject</sup> ~~along with their dogs~~, walk/walks daily.  
Either the vase <sup>subject</sup> 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.

Singular subject, so use verb with “s”

#### (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.

Plural subject, so use verb without “s”

#### (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.

Singular subject, so use verb with “s”

Neither the teacher nor his students was/were present.

Plural subject, so use verb without “s”

**Exercise:**

1. One of the students ( is/are ) studying algebra.
2. The exhibit of the artist's paintings ( was/were ) very interesting.
3. Mrs. Andrews, along with Mr. Stone, ( do/does ) volunteer work.
4. The applications for the job ( is/are ) on the desk.
5. Every one of the girls ( do/does ) her shorthand homework.
6. Either Julia or her friends ( is/are ) planning to attend.
7. Neither Michelle nor Paul ( has/have ) registered yet.
8. Neither the students nor the instructor ( want/wants ) to miss class.
9. The women, as well as the men ( sing/sings ) beautifully.
10. The dictator, accompanied by his generals, ( was/were ) at the meeting.

**V. (A) If a relative pronoun (WHO, WHOM, WHICH, THAT, WHOSE) refers to only one, use a singular verb.**

*Examples:* It is the only one of the stores that has / have shoes.

This is the only one of the trees that bloom / (blooms).

**(B) If a relative pronoun refers to a plural noun, use a plural verb.**

*Examples:* She is one of the best students who attend / attends.

He is one of those persons who never (grow) / grows up.

*Example B:  
The prepositional phrase  
cannot be omitted; use the  
plural verb.*

## SINGULAR AND PLURAL SUBJECTS AND VERBS

**Exercise 1:** If a word is singular, write **S** before it. If it is plural, write **P**.

- |          |         |           |            |
|----------|---------|-----------|------------|
| _____ 1. | morning | _____ 6.  | mosquitoes |
| _____ 2. | calves  | _____ 7.  | actress    |
| _____ 3. | women   | _____ 8.  | cave       |
| _____ 4. | she     | _____ 9.  | we         |
| _____ 5. | pencils | _____ 10. | leaves     |

**Exercise 2:** The subjects and verbs that follow are in agreement. If an item is singular, write **S** before it. If it is plural, write **P**.

- |          |              |           |                 |
|----------|--------------|-----------|-----------------|
| _____ 1. | people think | _____ 6.  | night arrives   |
| _____ 2. | wind howls   | _____ 7.  | gates open      |
| _____ 3. | owls hoot    | _____ 8.  | she tries       |
| _____ 4. | we practice  | _____ 9.  | actor rehearses |
| _____ 5. | days pass    | _____ 10. | girls study     |

## SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

**Exercise:** In each of the following sentences, two verbs are written in parentheses. First locate and underline the subject. Then circle the one that agrees with the subject.

*Example:* Cherry trees (lines, line) the Potomac.

1. An electric computer (solves, solve) difficult problems quickly.
2. Many colleges (has, have) computers.
3. Over one hundred thousand forest fires (is, are) reported each year.
4. Sometimes lightning (causes, cause) fires.
5. Careless people (is, are) often at fault.
6. Forest rangers (says, say) that we can prevent forest fires.
7. Some Polynesian divers (descends, descend) almost forty-five feet without special equipment.
8. The owl's eyes (makes, make) it look wise.

9. Actually, the owl (sees, see) poorly during the day.
10. Every year scientists (discovers, discover) new drugs to fight diseases.

### PROBLEMS IN AGREEMENT

In the previous exercise, it was easy to make the subjects and verbs agree because the verbs followed their subjects closely and the number of the subject was clear. However, a phrase may come between the subject and verb, creating an agreement problem, or the subject may be a pronoun, the number of which is hard to determine.

#### A. Phrases between subject and verb

Sometimes a prepositional phrase comes between the subject and verb in a sentence.

Remember - the subject is not in the prepositional phrase. Therefore, put ( ) around the prepositional phrase. Then locate the subject and agree the verb with the subject.

*Examples:*           The special effects (in the movie) were particularly original.  
                           The lights (in the stadium) have been dimmed.

**Exercise:** Put ( ) around prepositional phrases. Underline subject and circle the correct verb.

1. The girls from John Carroll (is, are) arriving early for class.
2. The heads of state (arrive, arrives) for the conference.
3. The bag of golf balls (is, are) for practice.
4. The boxes of chalk (is, are) at the chalkboard.
5. A shipment of clothing (is, are) expected soon.
6. A little practice in the evenings (help, helps) us play better.
7. The little baby with the dimples (slide, slides) down the bank.
8. The problems with Bobby (has, have) to be solved.
9. A package from my daughters (was, were) left on the doorstep.
10. The courses in college (require, requires) a lot of studying.

Sometimes phrases other than prepositional ones follow the subject. Usually they are set off by commas and are introduced by words and phrases like *including, with, in addition to, together with, as well as, or accompanied by*. The subject cannot be found in any of these phrases. Therefore, cross out any phrase set off by commas. Then locate the subject and agree the verb with the subject.

*Examples:* Mother, ~~along with Aunt Sue~~, (has, have) left for Canada.  
 The successful candidate, ~~including two of her aides~~, (has, have) entered the auditorium.



**Exercise:** Follow the basic directions.

1. (Is, Are) New York and Chicago the two largest cities in the United States?
2. Sleet and some snow (is, are) predicted for tomorrow.
3. The dogs in the pound and their owners (was, were) reunited.
4. New words and new meanings for old words (is, are) included.
5. Your fingernail and a piece of glass (is, are) two means for testing hardness in minerals.
6. Both talc and gypsum (shows, show) a fingernail scratch.
7. The president with his wife and the vice president (has, have) just left for the summit.
8. The opossum and the kangaroo (is, are) members of the same family of mammals.
9. Rattlesnakes, copperheads, coral snakes, and cottonmouths (is, are) four kinds of poisonous snakes found in the United States.
10. In large cities, subways and cabs (is, are) two popular means of transportation.

**C. Subjects connected by “or” or “nor”**

The verb agrees with the subject closer to it.

**Hint:** Draw a straight line after or or nor, ignoring the words before the line. Begin reading the sentence after this line.

*Examples:*      The chief geologists or | their assistant is due to arrive tonight.  
                      Neither a rabbit nor | raccoons do that kind of damage in a garden.

**Exercise 1:** Follow the basic directions. Also use the straight line to separate the or, nor subjects.

1. Either a loan or a scholarship (is, are) available to selected applicants.
2. A desk or a bookcase (goes, go) into that corner.
3. Neither sheets nor towels (is, are) furnished at camp.
4. (Has, Have) the books or other supplies come?
5. A vocabulary notebook or vocabulary flashcards (is, are) helpful for review.
6. Either the clock on the town hall or my watch (is, are) wrong.

7. Another boy or girl (takes, take) the part of the narrator.
8. A map or a guidebook (has, have) been my constant companion in this city.
9. Enthusiasm for the proposal or excitement about it (is, are) not the same as solid support.
10. A course in ceramics or a course in woodworking (is, are) recommended.

#### **D. Indefinite Pronouns**

The following common words are singular: each, either, neither, one, everyone, everybody, no one, nobody, anyone, anybody, someone, somebody.

*Examples:*     Anyone (without tickets) is asked to see Mrs. Harris.  
                  Each (of the newcomers) was welcomed (to the city.)  
                  No one understands a person who mumbles.

**Exercise 1:** Follow the basic directions.

1. Each of the apples (was, were) ripe.
2. No one except Mary and Lettie (was, were) excited.
3. Each (try, tries) to win the game.
4. Neither of them (walk, walks) to school.
5. Somebody (is, are) going to be surprised!
6. Everybody on the team (show, shows) outstanding ability.
7. Why (hasn't, haven't) someone given us the signal?
8. Either of the quarterbacks (is, are) going to be the new captain.
9. (Do, Does) everyone in the band play well?
10. Of all my friends, only one (has, have) written to me.

The following common words are plural: both, few, many, several.

*Examples:*   Few (of my neighbors) have parakeets.  
                  Many (of them) keep dogs as pets.

**Exercise 2:** Follow the basic directions. Notice that both singular and plural pronouns are tested.

1. Many of our group (has, have) had flu shots.
2. Everyone in the surrounding towns (was, were) warned about the epidemic.
3. Of the new cases, few (is, are) serious.
4. Neither of those paths (leads, lead) home.
5. Each of the stores (gives, give) gifts to our graduates.
6. Several in the group (doubts, doubt) the existence of intelligent life on other planets.
7. (Has, Have) either of you seen an ice hockey game?
8. In the corner (stands, stand) one of the suspects.
9. Many of the fans of football (think, thinks) about little else during the football season.
10. Both of the coaches of the varsity team (works, work) with the students every afternoon.

The following common words are either singular or plural based on context: all, any, more, most, some.

*Examples:* Most (of my neighbors) have parakeets.  
Most (of the food) was good

All (of the students) are here.  
All (of the newspaper) was soaked.

**Exercise 3:** Follow the basic directions. Notice that both singular and plural pronouns are tested.

1. All of the sopranos (sing, sings) the solo part in the operetta.
2. All of the movie (was, were) entertaining.
3. Most of the test (is, are) hard.
4. Most of the questions (is, are) hard.
5. Some of the books (is, are) inspiring.
6. Some of the information (is, are) unreliable.
7. I don't think any of the students (is, are) ready for the test.
8. She is wondering if any of the pie (is, are) left.

9. More of the house (needs, need) to be painted.
10. More of the students (is, are) coming tomorrow.

### **Special Problems in Agreement**

There are a few other constructions that may pose special problems in agreement of subject and verb. This section will cover some of these.

#### **A. Collective Nouns**

Some nouns that are singular in form name a group of people or things: class, company, family, team, group, flock, team, for example. These nouns are called collective nouns. A collective noun is singular when it refers to the group as a whole. It is plural when it represents or refers to the individuals in the group.

- Examples:*
- The jury was dismissed by the judge.
  - The faculty has decided to have a science table in the room.
  
  - The jury disagree on the verdict.
  - The faculty are still planning their curriculums.

**Exercise:** Follow the basic directions.

1. The group (was, were) going on a trip.
2. That flock of geese (make, makes) a beautiful pattern in the sky.
3. The team (is, are) celebrating its victory.
4. In July, the committee (make, makes) their decision about the location of the August picnic.
5. In the jungle, the herd often (stampede, stampedes).
6. After the chapter on research methods, the class (start, starts) their research papers.
7. Every summer the class (take, takes) many field trips.
8. The panel (has, have) differing opinions on that topic.
9. (Is, Are) the group in charge of refreshments here yet?
10. The company (vote, votes) for a new president next month.

## **B. Sentences beginning with HERE, THERE, or WHERE**

When the subject follows the verb, as in sentences beginning with there, here, or where, be careful to locate the subject and make sure that the verb agrees with it.

Introductory words, such as here, there, and where are never subjects of sentences. In these sentences, the subject usually follows the verb.

*Example:* Here (come, comes) Stephanie and her brother.

**Exercise:** Follow the basic directions.

1. Here on your desk (is, are) the reports for your consideration.
2. Where (has, have) the dance been held other years?
3. There (is, are) four of us going to the fair.
4. There (has, have) been rumors of a strike.
5. Here in this room (is, are) the best paintings.
6. There (come, comes) the team.
7. Here (is, are) one of the five members of the club.
8. Here in class (is, are) the time to learn.
9. There in the hammock (lie, lies) Carl and his dog.
10. There (is, are) the senator and the congressman on the steps of the Capitol.

## **C. Words Stating Amount**

Some words that are plural in form may be singular in meaning if they mean an amount (or unit) of something.

*Examples:* Thirty-five cents is enough for lunch today. (Although thirty-five cents is plural in form, it means a single amount of money. It takes a singular verb, is.)

Two weeks never seems long enough for vacation. (Although two weeks is plural, it is thought of here as a single unit of time. It takes a singular verb, seems.)

**Exercise:** Follow the basic directions.

1. Two cups of flour (seems, seem) too much for that recipe.
2. Three days (was, were) all the time needed for the tour.

3. Two hours of homework in one subject (is, are) unfair.
4. Three weeks of rehearsal time usually (proves, prove) to be suffice
5. Fifty cents (is, are) more than enough for your allowance.

#### **D. Titles, organizations, or countries**

A title, organization, or country, even when plural in form, usually takes a singular verb.

*Example:* “Murders in the Rue Morgue” is an intriguing mystery.

**Exercise:** Follow the basic directions.

1. "The Seven Sisters" (is, are) a story about a New England family.
2. Morgan and Company (advertises, advertise) beach bags for a dollar.
3. The Veterans of Foreign Wars (is, are) holding its convention in Chicago this year.
4. The Women (was, were) written by Clare Boothe Luce.
5. Wales (has, have) a beautiful countryside.

#### **E. Don't and Doesn't**

The words don't and doesn't (contractions of do not and does not) must, like all other verbs, agree with their subjects. Mistakes are often made with these forms.

**HINT:** To avoid mistakes, use **do** and **does** (take off the **n't**). Remember the singular verb ends in **s**.

*Examples:* Lena **doesn't** exercise enough. (Lena **does** exercise enough.)  
Those answers **don't** make sense. (Those answers **do** make sense.)

**Exercise:** Follow the basic directions, and use the **do/does** hint.

1. The girl (don't, doesn't) understand the problem.
2. (Don't, Doesn't) she want the prize?
3. The lettuce (don't, doesn't) look fresh.
4. That school (don't, doesn't) have a stage.
5. It (don't, doesn't) matter at all.
6. He (don't, doesn't) see the rainbow.

7. The boxer and the poodle (don't, doesn't) get along.
8. The curtains in the room (don't, doesn't) match the color of the walls.
9. Mary (don't, doesn't) need to go with me.
10. This bar of candy (don't, doesn't) taste good.

#### **F. Plural-looking nouns**

A few nouns, though plural in form, take a singular verb.

*Examples:*     Mathematics **seems** easy this year.  
                  Mumps **is** certainly an uncomfortable disease.  
                  The news **was** not good.

**Exercise:** Follow the basic directions.

1. Economics (is, are) taught by Professor Gray.
2. The news on the radio (was, were) encouraging.
3. Ethics (is, are) a code of values.
4. Politics (appeal, appeals) to some people.
5. Civics (was, were) my dad's best subject.
6. Measles (is, are) very contagious.
7. Social Studies 101 (has, have) always been an interesting course.
8. Aerobics (is, are) a fun activity for most youngsters.
9. Gymnastics often (require, requires) the use of special apparatus.
10. Acrobatics (involve, involves) skills in agility and balance.

#### **G. Nouns ending in -ing**

Occasionally the **-ing** form of the verb can be used as a noun and, therefore, as the subject of a sentence. This **-ing** subject takes a singular verb.

*Examples:* Learning to drive **is** an exciting experience.  
                  Building wooden tables **was** my dad's favorite hobby.

**Exercise:** Follow the basic directions.

1. Slicing tomatoes (is, are) messy.

2. Every semester, studying for final exams (cause, causes) stress.
3. Riding the rapids in Colorado (provide, provides) adventure.
4. Mowing lawns (furnish, furnishes) additional income for youngsters.
5. Shopping for school clothes often (test, tests) a mother's patience.

## H. I and you

I and you take the plural form of the verb. The only exception to this rule is the singular verb **am** which is used exclusively with the pronoun **I**.

*Examples:* I **am going** to school.  
You **are going** to school.

**Exercise:** Follow the basic directions.

1. (Have, Has) you seen Mrs. Smith?
2. I (is, am) leaving for my trip to Ohio on Monday.
3. (Do, Does) you want to go to the mall tomorrow?
4. I (know, knows) that you (has, have) been doing a lot of work.
5. During the night I usually (hear, hears) strange noises.

## REVIEW SECTION

In each of the review exercises, follow the basic directions and use any of the hints that apply.

### EXERCISE 1:

1. The citizens of this town (demand, demands) police protection.
2. Glenville's Glee Club always (give, gives) a fine concert.
3. Either Kathy or Dorothy (is, are) going.
4. Both Ruth and I (go, goes) to bed early.
5. The man, along with the two women, (was, were) delayed.
6. We (was, were) passed by six cars.
7. Few of the students (live, lives) in the dormitory.

8. The ice cream (melt, melts) at room temperature.
9. No one (has, have) stolen my secret ideas!
10. The first baseman and the catcher (has, have) made many errors.
11. Mrs. Laird (speak, speaks) with authority.
12. The guitar, accompanied by the bass viol, (play, plays) the tune.
13. Joe and his brother always (drink, drinks) too fast.
14. Thelma, as well as her sister, (is, are) good at sports.
15. Neither of my parents (is, are) home tonight.
16. The captain of the two teams (is, are) Dan.
17. Where (do, does) the Chester family live?
18. I (see, sees) your uncle and cousin coming down the street.

**EXERCISE 2:**

1. Someone (has, have) to do the work.
2. Steve, along with Jim and Cindy, (was, were) there.
3. Where (is, are) you going?
4. There (go, goes) Emily and Claire.
5. Each of the members (has, have) contributed.
6. Ten dollars (is, are) not much money.
7. The set of rules (control, controls) the game.
8. Neither the boss nor her assistant (was, were) present.
9. Here (is, are) an old and famous landmark.
10. Ralph, along with his father, (is, are) attending the game.
11. One often (ask, asks) for help from others.
12. Where (has, have) you and Rachel worked during the summer?

13. The leader of the choir (sing, sings) tenor.
14. The helpers, as well as the leader, (has, have) to work well.
15. Everyone (hope, hopes) to find a special friend.
16. A sign of the times (is, are) the fashion in clothes.
17. There (is, are) opportunities for all.
18. Neither my sisters nor I (expect, expects) to graduate in June.

### **EXERCISE 3:**

1. Unfortunately, my mother (doesn't, don't) get a vacation this year.
2. Many of the people in her shop (gets, get) only a few days.
3. The safety commissioner or the radio announcer (has, have) suggestions for driving carefully on holidays.
4. Each of us (knows, know) how to avoid accidents.
5. Our car (doesn't, don't) have any antifreeze yet.
6. There (is, are) a briefcase, a laptop, and a tape recorder in the office.
7. Several names of places in our country (comes, come) from Spanish words.
8. Five hours (is, are) needed to fly across the Atlantic.
9. Anyone on the tennis courts today (is, are) liable to get a sunburn.
10. The architects (wasn't, weren't) sure what kind of building to plan for the new hotel.
11. The Knights of Columbus (meets, meet) every Thursday evening.
12. One of the wheels (wasn't, weren't) functioning properly.
13. Every one of the girls (do, does) her homework.
14. Classifying students (is, are) a tedious job for a guidance counselor.
15. (Is, Are) there enough copies of the music to go around?
16. It (doesn't, don't) look like a snowman.
17. Economics (is, are) a complex but fascinating subject.
18. Either the leader or his followers (doesn't, don't) understand the instructions.