

## Unit 7: Subject-Verb Agreement

### Lesson 44 Subject-Verb Agreement

The subject and verb in a sentence must agree. In the present tense, add -s or -es to the base form for the third-person singular.

**SINGULAR**

He **skates**.

She **wins**.

**PLURAL**

They **skate**.

They **win**.

The verbs *be*, *have*, and *do* change form to agree with their subjects.

**SINGULAR**

I **am** climbing.

You **are** climbing.

She **is** climbing.

I **have** reached the top.

You **have** reached the top.

He **has** reached the top.

I **do** climb often.

**Do** you climb often?

**Does** she climb often?

**PLURAL**

We **are** climbing.

You **are** climbing.

They **are** climbing.

We **have** reached the top.

You **have** reached the top.

They **have** reached the top.

We **do** climb often.

**Do** you climb often?

**Do** they climb often?

► **Exercise 1 Underline the form of the verb that agrees with the subject.**

My younger brother (has, have) a large collection of toy dinosaurs.

1. Fossils (is, are) fascinating records of the past.
2. They (tells, tell) us about plants and animals of long ago.
3. Some ancient animals, such as dinosaurs, (was, were) huge.
4. A dinosaur fossil (preserves, preserve) a tooth, a bone, or even a major part of the skeleton.
5. Fossil hunters (has found, have found) dinosaur remains around the world.
6. Dinosaurs (was fixed, were fixed) in time in a number of ways.
7. Some (was frozen, were frozen) in glaciers.
8. Such a dinosaur (is, are) like the frozen food in your freezer.
9. Other dinosaurs (was caught, were caught) in tar pits and preserved there.
10. Fossil evidence (shows, show) that many dinosaurs died in a short period of time.
11. Scientists (believes, believe) that a major disaster occurred in the past.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

12. Different theories (exists, exist) about why this happened.
13. One theory (states, state) that a comet collided with Earth and stirred up so much dust that the sun's light was blocked out.
14. At any rate, we (does know, do know) that dinosaurs no longer roam the earth.
15. Scientists (studies, study) dinosaur remains to find out what life was like in ancient times.
16. Stomach contents (reveals, reveal) what animals and plants lived at the same time.
17. Recently a fossilized dinosaur egg (was found, were found).
18. The unhatched baby dinosaur (have been, has been) preserved in the egg.
19. A fossil hunt (is, are) an exciting pastime.
20. Anyone who (excavates, excavate) a dinosaur has many stories to tell.

► **Exercise 2** Choose the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject. Write your choice in the blank.

- The students \_\_\_\_\_ **were** \_\_\_\_\_ about to study a unit on fossils. (was, were)
1. Imagine you \_\_\_\_\_ **are** \_\_\_\_\_ walking in the woods one day. (is, are)
  2. You \_\_\_\_\_ **see** \_\_\_\_\_ the dried tracks of a deer in the muddy bank along a stream. (sees, see)
  3. Of course the tracks probably \_\_\_\_\_ **were made** \_\_\_\_\_ only days before you saw them. (was made, were made)
  4. The dried tracks \_\_\_\_\_ **are** \_\_\_\_\_ the beginnings of a fossil. (is, are)
  5. If a sudden rainstorm \_\_\_\_\_ **fills** \_\_\_\_\_ the tracks up with mud, the deer print will be preserved, at least for a time. (fills, fill)
  6. Several materials \_\_\_\_\_ **make** \_\_\_\_\_ good fossils. (makes, make)
  7. A bone \_\_\_\_\_ **is** \_\_\_\_\_ good fossil material because of its hardness. (is, are)
  8. Animal shells also \_\_\_\_\_ **produce** \_\_\_\_\_ good fossils. (produces, produce)
  9. Despite their softness, jellyfish \_\_\_\_\_ **do leave** \_\_\_\_\_ fossil imprints. (does leave, do leave)
  10. Sometimes an insect \_\_\_\_\_ **is fossilized** \_\_\_\_\_ in amber. (is fossilized, are fossilized)
  11. Amber \_\_\_\_\_ **is** \_\_\_\_\_ the hard sap of very old trees. (is, are)
  12. As an insect sticks in the amber, the amber \_\_\_\_\_ **hardens** \_\_\_\_\_ around it. (hardens, harden)
  13. Most fossils, however, \_\_\_\_\_ **have formed** \_\_\_\_\_ in layers of rock. (has formed, have formed)
  14. Animal skeletons fall to the bottom of rivers and lakes, where they \_\_\_\_\_ **are covered** \_\_\_\_\_ with mud or silt. (is covered, are covered)
  15. If the animal's skeleton is hard, it \_\_\_\_\_ **makes** \_\_\_\_\_ a better fossil. (makes, make)

**Lesson 45****Subject-Verb Agreement and Intervening Prepositional Phrases**

The subject of a sentence is never contained within a prepositional phrase. The verb must agree with the subject of the sentence, not the object of a preposition.

The **color** of the thunderclouds **worries** me. (The subject is *color*, a singular noun. *Of the thunderclouds* is a prepositional phrase with a plural object. However, the verb *worries* agrees with the singular subject.)

The **players** on the team **have** new uniforms. (The subject is *players*, a plural noun. *On the team* is a prepositional phrase with a singular object. However, the verb *have* agrees with the plural subject.)

► **Exercise 1** Underline the verb in parentheses that correctly completes the sentence by agreeing with the subject.

A vase of roses usually (stand, stands) on the piano.

1. The rain forests of the earth (occurs, occur) in places where there is much rainfall.
2. The rain forest ecosystem, to biologists, (is, are) the source of much diversity.
3. Rain forests in a tropical area (is, are) warm and humid.
4. The number of tree species (is estimated, are estimated) to be about 3,000.
5. The area around the trees (is filled, are filled) with mosses, vines, and other water-loving plants.
6. The rain forest, with complex food chains, (recycles, recycle) nutrients constantly.
7. No dead plants on the ground (is, are) left there for long.
8. Plant matter from different species (decays, decay) quickly and is reused as food.
9. Plant life, with many animal species, (keep, keeps) the rain forest teeming with noise and motion.
10. The mammals of a rain forest (includes, include) leopards, jaguars, bats, and different monkeys.
11. Hoots, chirps, and roars from every corner (echoes, echo) throughout the day.
12. An explorer of rain forests also (thrills, thrill) at the wide variety of colorful birds.
13. Scientists interested in insects (has discovered, have discovered) hundreds of new species.
14. The animals on the forest floor (numbers, number) far fewer than those that live in the trees.
15. Not every traveler to these tropical paradises (focuses, focus) on animals.
16. Some visitors on a search for new healing substances (looks, look) at medicinal plants.
17. Students of the rain forest (is alarmed, are alarmed) at its rate of destruction.



**Lesson 46****Subject-Verb Agreement and Linking Verbs**

In sentences with **linking verbs**, the verb agrees with the subject, not with the predicate nominative.

The **flowers** in the pot **are** a **gift**. (The verb, *are*, agrees with the subject, *flowers*, not the predicate nominative, *gift*.)

The **result** of the experiment **was** more effective **medications**. (The verb, *was*, agrees with the subject, *result*, not the predicate nominative, *medications*.)

► **Exercise 1 Underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.**

Jake's excuse for tardines (is, are) his morning chores.

1. Outdoor activities (seems, seem) the best method for teaching the nature class.
2. The total cost (was, were) hundreds of dollars more than we expected.
3. Exercising and dieting (remains, remain) a healthful way to live.
4. The game scores (was, were) a major disappointment.
5. Jana's injured teeth (is, are) a source of much pain to her.
6. Pinks and oranges (makes, make) a beautiful sunset.
7. My greatest success this year (is, are) my grades.
8. The Porpoises (is, are) the best swimming team in town.
9. The band director's biggest disappointment (remains, remain) the clarinets.
10. The man's remarks (was, were) an embarrassment to his listeners.
11. Our most important resource (is, are) our children.
12. The Carters (is, are) a happy couple.
13. The two lovely monuments (remains, remain) a testament to human courage.
14. The two robberies (was, were) a mystery to the police.
15. The problem (is, are) too many cooks in the kitchen.
16. The cause of the accident (was, were) faulty brakes.
17. The noisy neighbors (was, were) a constant problem.
18. The cost of pollution (is, are) higher medical bills.
19. The reason for the delay (is, are) the strikes in the trucking industry.
20. The sounds of the birds (was, were) the only disturbance.



**Lesson 48****Subject-Verb Agreement and Special Subjects**

A **collective noun** names a group (see Lesson 1, pp. 47–48). In a sentence, a collective noun is **singular** when it names the group as a whole. It is **plural** when it refers to individual members of a group.

**Singular:** The team **takes** the bus.

The cast **rehearses** the play.

**Plural:** The team **get** regular physical exams.

The cast **sign** autographs for the audience.

Some nouns ending in *-s*, such as *mumps*, *measles*, and *mathematics*, take singular verbs. Other nouns ending in *-s*, such as *scissors*, *pants*, *binoculars*, and *eyeglasses*, take plural verbs. Many nouns that end in *-ics* are either singular or plural, depending on the context.

**Singular:** Mathematics **is** my favorite subject.

**Plural:** My pants **are** muddy from the river.

**Singular:** Politics **is** that professor's area of expertise.

**Plural:** That candidate's politics **were** dirty during the campaign.

A noun of amount can refer to a single unit, in which case it is singular. It can also refer to several individual units, in which case it is plural.

**Singular:** Ten **weeks is** the period of the first term.

**Plural:** Ten **weeks are** needed to complete that research.

► **Exercise 1** Underline the subject. Fill in the blank with the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject in the context of the sentence.

The recycling club \_\_\_\_\_ asks \_\_\_\_\_ for the entire neighborhood's support. (asks, ask)

- The band \_\_\_\_\_ plays \_\_\_\_\_ school songs at halftime. (plays, play)
- Congress \_\_\_\_\_ plans \_\_\_\_\_ to adjourn early this session. (plans, plan)
- Measles \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ no longer the dread disease it once was. (is, are)
- The six months \_\_\_\_\_ have dragged \_\_\_\_\_ since my best friend moved. (has dragged, have dragged)
- The orchestra \_\_\_\_\_ dress \_\_\_\_\_ in black for concerts. (dresses, dress)
- My family \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_ sick with the flu. (is, are)
- Your binoculars \_\_\_\_\_ were \_\_\_\_\_ a big help at our star party. (was, were)
- Seven feet \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ a long distance to jump. (is, are)
- Three eggs \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_ too many for this recipe. (is, are)
- Athletics \_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_ the only thing Jack wanted to pursue. (was, were)



**Lesson 49****Subject-Verb Agreement and Compound Subjects**

Some sentences have more than one subject. A **compound subject** that is joined by *and* or *both...and* is usually plural. However, some compound subjects have two parts that make up one unit. These take a singular verb.

- Plural:** Molly and Mabel **are racing**.  
**Plural:** Both Aunt Fran and Uncle George **have arrived**.  
**Singular:** Milk and cookies **is** a good snack.

Compound subjects joined by *or*, *nor*, *either...or*, or *neither...nor* always have a verb that agrees with the closer subject.

- Singular:** Either Mark or Carlo **was** the winner.  
**Singular:** Neither the Morgans nor Mr. Hale **is** coming to the dinner.  
**Plural:** Neither the book nor the calendars **are** on sale.

When a compound subject is preceded by *many a*, *every*, or *each*, the subject takes a singular verb.

- Many a student and teacher **has come** to Ms. Randolph for advice.  
 Every Tom, Dick, and Harry **has** an opinion.  
 Each tree and fence post **is covered** with political signs.

► **Exercise 1** Draw a line under the compound subject of each sentence. Choose the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject, then write it in the blank.

- Many a bird and squirrel visits our backyard feeders. (visit, visits)
1. Every orchard and farm was damaged by the storm. (was damaged, were damaged)
  2. Spaghetti and meatballs is a regular meal at our home. (is, are)
  3. Neither Grace nor her sisters take the early bus. (takes, take)
  4. Either the squirrels or the opossum chews through the storage boxes. (chews, chew)
  5. The bat and the ball are Ed's. (is, are)
  6. Every seed, nut, and suet ball was eaten. (was eaten, were eaten)
  7. Each bird and field mouse is hungry. (is, are)
  8. Both movies and books are enjoyable. (is, are)
  9. Neither the soup nor the casserole is hot. (is, are)
  10. Either Lani or Marcia skates in the race today. (skates, skate)
  11. Both my shoes and socks are full of burrs. (is, are)
  12. Either my dad or my brothers meet me at the bus station. (meets, meet)

**Lesson 50****Subject-Verb Agreement and Intervening Expressions**

Certain expressions seem to create a compound subject but do not. *Accompanied by, as well as, in addition to, plus, and together with* are expressions that introduce phrases that tell about the subject. However, the subject remains singular and takes a singular verb.

The **President**, as well as the Cabinet, **is expected** tonight.

The **mayor**, accompanied by her staff, **eats** lunch in the cafeteria.

► **Exercise 1** Draw a line under the subject. Then write in the blank the form of the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject. Use the present tense of the verb.

- Joe, as well as his brothers, \_\_\_\_\_ **delivers** \_\_\_\_\_ papers in the morning. (deliver)
- Folk, in addition to rock, \_\_\_\_\_ **is** \_\_\_\_\_ my favorite music. (be)
  - Weight lifting, as well as wrestling, \_\_\_\_\_ **takes** \_\_\_\_\_ strength. (take)
  - Jupiter, plus Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune, \_\_\_\_\_ **is** \_\_\_\_\_ a gas planet. (be)
  - The truck, as well as a car and a bus, \_\_\_\_\_ **is** \_\_\_\_\_ involved in the wreck. (be)
  - The players, plus the coach and manager, \_\_\_\_\_ **travel** \_\_\_\_\_ by bus. (travel)
  - A hoe, in addition to a rake and a ladder, \_\_\_\_\_ **is** \_\_\_\_\_ missing from the garage. (be)
  - The singer, accompanied by her bodyguards, \_\_\_\_\_ **arrives** \_\_\_\_\_ tonight. (arrive)
  - The doctor, together with a large staff, \_\_\_\_\_ **treats** \_\_\_\_\_ many patients. (treat)
  - A plane, in addition to a service truck, \_\_\_\_\_ **sits** \_\_\_\_\_ on the runway. (sit)
  - Nancy, plus her parents and grandparents, \_\_\_\_\_ **goes** \_\_\_\_\_ to Florida for the holidays. (go)
  - My bicycle, as well as my skates, \_\_\_\_\_ **needs** \_\_\_\_\_ repair. (need)
  - The toolshed, together with the garage and the greenhouse, \_\_\_\_\_ **sits** \_\_\_\_\_ near the stream. (sit)
  - The bank, as well as the arcade, \_\_\_\_\_ **opens** \_\_\_\_\_ tomorrow. (open)
  - The VCR, plus the compact-disc player, \_\_\_\_\_ **makes** \_\_\_\_\_ a good holiday gift. (make)
  - The watermelon, as well as the cantaloupe, \_\_\_\_\_ **is** \_\_\_\_\_ ripe. (be)
  - Dan, in addition to his friends, \_\_\_\_\_ **seems** \_\_\_\_\_ depressed. (seem)
  - The Big Dipper, accompanied by the Little Dipper, \_\_\_\_\_ **circles** \_\_\_\_\_ the polestar. (circle)
  - The city, as well as the suburbs, \_\_\_\_\_ **votes** \_\_\_\_\_ today. (vote)
  - The bike, plus the skates and the skis, \_\_\_\_\_ **belongs** \_\_\_\_\_ to Oona. (belong)
  - Cereal, together with fruit and milk, \_\_\_\_\_ **provides** \_\_\_\_\_ a good breakfast. (provide)



## Lesson 51

# Subject-Verb Agreement and Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects

Not all subjects are nouns. Many subjects consist of indefinite pronouns. A verb must agree in number with an **indefinite pronoun** used as a subject.

- Singular:** Everything about the party **was** perfect.  
**Singular:** One of the windows **is** broken.  
**Singular:** Nothing on television tonight **interests** me.  
**Plural:** Many of our friends **study** Spanish.  
**Plural:** A few of the trees **are** stunted.

Some pronouns can be either singular or plural, depending upon the nouns to which they refer in the sentence.

- Singular:** All of the punch **is** gone.  
**Plural:** All of the players **are** exhausted.

Indefinite pronouns fall into three groups, as shown in the following chart.

### INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

<b>Always Singular</b>	each	everyone	nobody	anything	
	either	everybody	nothing	someone	
	neither	everything	anyone	somebody	
	one	no one	anybody	something	
<b>Always Plural</b>	several	few	both	many	
<b>Singular or Plural</b>	some	all	any	most	none

► **Exercise 1** Draw one line under the indefinite pronoun subject. Draw two lines under the correct form of the verb.

Several of my friends (swim, swims) on the school team.

1. Many of the passengers (is, are) unhappy with coach service.
2. A few of the swimmers (was, were) ready to leave the pool.
3. Everything in the window (look, looks) expensive.
4. Something in the basement (has, have) eaten the vegetables.
5. One of the dogs (hunt, hunts) alone.
6. Some of the tomatoes (was, were) spoiled.
7. Everybody in the class (has, have) voted.
8. No one (answer, answers) the phone at the Caldwells.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

9. Nothing (seem, seems) to please Linda.
10. All of the grass (is, are) brown from the drought.
11. Anybody who was there (know, knows) that Randy gave a good speech.
12. One of the contestants (was, were) late.
13. Nobody in our class (like, likes) the new movie.
14. Several of the squirrels (has, have) raided the sunflower sack.
15. Most of the class (do, does) push-ups each morning.
16. None of the mothers (like, likes) this arrangement.
17. Everything at the museum (was, were) fascinating.
18. Both of my aunts (is, are) from Poland.
19. Nobody in the audience (understand, understands) the play.
20. None of the players (was, were) tired.
21. Many of the old pirate ships (has been, have been) lost in that area.
22. Neither of the deer (use, uses) the salt lick.
23. Several of the class officers (was, were) ill.
24. Nothing on the menu (interest, interests) me.
25. One of the defendants (has, have) pleaded not guilty.
26. Several of the judges (has, have) ruled on their cases.
27. Everybody in the room (was, were) freezing.
28. Several of the high-school students (earn, earns) money after school.
29. Somebody in our community (has, have) won that huge prize.
30. All (is, are) well with the world.
31. Both of the twins (sing, sings) in the choir.
32. Someone (has, have) painted the old chairs.
33. Few of the people polled (approve, approves) of the new policies.
34. All of the spaghetti (was, were) gone.
35. Everyone here (has, have) finished lunch.
36. One of the babies in the nursery (is, are) crying.
37. Few of the people invited (is, are) coming.
38. Anyone at all (is, are) eligible to enter the race.

**Lesson 55****Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement in Number and Gender**

An antecedent is the word or group of words to which a pronoun refers or that a pronoun replaces. A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number (singular or plural) and gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter). A pronoun's antecedent may be a noun, another pronoun, or a phrase or clause acting as a noun.

Paula brought **her** grandfather to speak to the class.

► **Exercise 1** Complete the sentence by adding a personal pronoun that agrees with the antecedent. Underline the antecedent.

Carla left her gloves on the kitchen table.

- The students should have their books by Friday.
- Every person must bring his, her, his or her own towel to gym class.
- Many older Americans know the exact date they started their first job.
- Only three club members paid their dues by the deadline.
- If you think the colors clash, we will change them.
- When my mom and her four sisters were children, they all shared one big bedroom.
- Claude and Norman practice their sidestrokes every day.
- Gloria works for two hours every day after she leaves school.
- Sometimes people without experience are intimidated by computers. They needn't be.
- Gabriel and Chad don't want to work after school, but they need the money.
- Natasha and Paul found they share an interest in classical automobiles.
- George and Susan both brought their snakes to science class when we studied reptiles.
- Some students don't take class elections very seriously; they should.
- Each participant can be very proud of his, her, his or her accomplishments.
- I think my grandma is the best gardener in her neighborhood.
- They finally decided Jack must have the tickets in his room.
- Dad says all of his children spend too much of their time watching television.



**Lesson 56****Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement in Person**

A **pronoun** must agree in person with its antecedent. When the antecedent of a pronoun is another pronoun, be sure that the two pronouns agree in person.

**Bryan** gave **his** old guitar to Jacob. **We** want **our** money back!

► **Exercise 1** Fill in the blank with the correct personal pronoun. Underline the antecedent for each pronoun.

Juan is planning his vacation.

1. The students in Mrs. Nakleh's social studies class discussed how they would spend the vacation.
2. Kristen thought her younger brothers might be frightened when they were close to snakes.
3. Alligators are again plentiful in the Southeast, and hunting them is now allowed.
4. Jason was spending the week with his dad in Boston, where they were going to watch two Celtics games.
5. Alfredo likes to be by the sea, where he can smell the air with its salty taste.
6. People can watch the seagulls swoop down to find their dinner in the Boston Harbor.
7. Each businessman gave his report at the board meeting.
8. We wanted to see our new apartment before moving in.
9. In the spring, the robin was busy building its nest.
10. Anita plays both volleyball and basketball, but volleyball is her favorite sport.
11. Sam and Jose, who sing duets, agree they need more practice before the contest.
12. Michael's father wants him to take geometry and accelerated English next year.
13. Cats like to relax in the sun and stretch their bodies.
14. Brett's nickname is "Stretch," which refers to his height.
15. Nathan and Elizabeth cannot go out for pizza because they have terrible colds.
16. That particular fish has black stripes along its sides.
17. I saw so many things that impressed me in Washington, D.C.

**Lesson 57****Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement with Indefinite Pronoun Antecedents**

In general, use a **singular personal pronoun** when the antecedent is a singular indefinite pronoun, such as *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, much, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, other, somebody, someone, or something*. If the antecedent refers to a person and the gender is not specific, it is usually most acceptable to use *he or she, him or her, or his or hers*.

**Each** of the boys folded **his** sleeping bag. **Anyone** can bring **his or her** favorite CD.

Use a **plural personal pronoun** when the antecedent is a plural indefinite pronoun, such as *several, both, few, and many*.

**Both** of the runners broke **their** previous records.

Some **indefinite pronouns** can be either singular or plural depending on the context of the sentence: *all, any, enough, more, most, none, and some*.

We will play if **enough** of the students bring **their** equipment.

► **Exercise 1** Write a personal pronoun that agrees with the indefinite pronoun antecedent in the sentence. Underline the antecedent.

Few of the glee club members forgot their music.

- Everyone has to finish his, her, or his or her assignment before Thursday.
- Many will find that their uniforms from last year are now too small.
- Does anyone disagree with me? Let him, her, or him or her say so now.
- Someone took the wrong jacket. If he, she, or he or she returns it, please call me.
- All of the computers lost their power.
- Many of the graduates did not even recognize their classmates at the reunion.
- Both of the contestants were nervous; they kept shifting their feet.
- After gym on Monday, only one of the boys made it to his next class on time.
- Everyone must pay for his, her, or his or her ticket before boarding the bus.
- One of these girls assembled her own computer.
- No one should lend his, her, or his or her comb to anyone else.
- Each of the girls had to show she could make ten baskets in a row.