

Subject Verb Agreement

1) To be (am; is; are/ was; were)

I **am/ was** (to be) busy.

You **are/were** (to be) clever.

He **is/was** (to be) late.

They **are/were** (to be) here.

2) To have (have; has; had)

- If the subject is **third person** (he, she, it; Ravi; Sunil, Rahul, India, etc.) + **singular**, use “has”.

I have/had (to have) a car.

He has/had (to have) a car.

They have/ had (to have) a car.

Sunita has/ had (to have) a car.

People have (to have) money.

3) s/es to the base form of the verb:

If the subject is **third person** (he, she, it; Ravi; Sunil, Rahul, India, etc.) + **singular**, add **s/es** to the base form of the verb in the Present Tense.

1) Abdul bowls (bowl /bowls) to Karim.

2) They ask (ask/asks) many questions.

3) He opens (opens/ open) the drawer.

4) I submit (submit/submits) assignment.

- In English a verb must agree with its subject **in number and person**.

Singular Verbs: am; is; was; has; s/es to the base form of the verb like write- writes, put-puts, keep-keeps, open-opens, etc.

Plural Verbs: are; were; have; base form of the verb: write- write, put-put, keep-keep, open-open, etc.

Rules:

1) Collective Nouns:

*Collective nouns like **family, government, team, audience, and committee** take either a singular verb or a plural verb. We use a singular verb if we are thinking of **the group as a whole**.*

1) The family **has** (has/have) lived here for over a hundred years.

➤ *We use a plural verb if we are thinking of the group as a number of individual people:*

2) The family **have** (has/have) **all** gone on holiday.

3) The audience was (was/were) large.

4) The audience are (are/is) requested to keep their seats.

5) The committee **has** (has/have) issued its report.

6) The committee **are** (are/is) divided on one minor point.

➤ *The verb is always plural after collective nouns like **people, police and cattle**:*

1. People often **say** (say/says) such things.

2. People **are** (are/is) demanding vaccination.

3. The police **are** (are/is) questioning two men.

4. The cattle **are** (are/is) grazing in the field.

2. Noun Phrase of Amount and Measurement:

We use singular verb after a noun phrase of amount and measurement:

1) Fifteen minutes **is** (is/are) allowed to each speaker.

2) Rs 225 **seems** (seems/seem) a lot of money for a shirt.

3) 20 kilometres **is** (is /are) a long way to walk.

3. The following nouns ending in **-s count** as singular and therefore take singular verbs:

1. News:

The news is true.

2. Subject names like **politics, economics, physics, mathematics** :

1. Politics **is** one of the university subjects.

3. Some proper names like **Naples, Athens, Wales, the United States of America**:

1. Athens **is** (is/are) a very big city.

2. Wales **is** (is/are) part of England.

3. The United States of America **is** (is/are) one of the most powerful nations in the world.

4. Some diseases like **measles, mumps, rickets**:

1. Measles **takes** (takes/take) a long time to get over.

5. Plural titles of books:

1. *Gulliver's Travels* is (is/are) an enjoyable book.

4. Some nouns denoting two things joined together, like spectacles, scissors, trousers, pants, pyjamas, are treated as plural.

1. Where **are** (are/is) my spectacles ?

2. His trousers **are** (are/is) dirty.

3. Where **are** (is/are) his scissors ?

4. My scissors **have** (have/has) been stolen.

5. His pyjamas are (are /is) from England.

5) When two subjects are joined by or, either ...or, or neithernor, the general rule is that the verb agrees with the subject immediately before it:

1. **Either the manager or his family members have** (have/ has) been involved in the scam.

2. **Either his family members or the manager has** (have/ has) been involved in the scam.

3. **Neither the inspector nor his associates were** (was/were) responsible.

4. **Either the manager or the workers were** (was/were) present.

5) **Ravi or his friends are** (are/is) playing in the garden.

6. **Either his seniors or he is** (is/ are) given credit.

6. Singular nouns joined by “and” usually take a plural verb:

- 1) Gold **and** silver are (is/are) metals.
- 2) Water **and** fire do not (do not/does not) agree.
- 3) Mohan **and** Ram were (was/were) good friends.

But we use a singular verb when we think of the nouns as making up “ one thing”:

- 1) The poet and the philosopher are (are/is) dead.
2. The poet and philosopher is (are/is) dead.
3. Bread and Butter is (is/are) his only food.
4. The rise and fall of the tide is (is/are) due to lunar influence.

7. When the subject is *one of+ plural noun*, the verb should be singular, to agree with one:

1. *One of* the greatest *poets* is (is/are) Keats.
2. *One of* the killers was (was/were) found dead.
3. *One of* my brothers lives (lives/ live) in Mumbai.

8. We use singular verb with, *either, neither, each, everyone, anyone, none* followed by *of + plural noun/pronoun*:

1. **Neither of** them knows (knows/ know) the answer.
2. **Each of** you gets (get/gets) promotion.
3. **Neither of** the ministers is (is/are) present.

9. When a **singular noun** is followed by *with/together with/along with* + *plural noun* or *nouns* joined with *and*, the verb should be **singular** :

1. Mr Raman, with his wife and children , has (have/has) gone to Mumbai.
2. The minister, along with his family and associates, is (is/are) spotted in the party.
3. The Prime Minister, with the Minister of External Affairs and the Minister for Finance has left (has left/have left) for America.
4. The Principal, together with students, visits (visits/visit) the bird sanctuary.

10. The expression: *More than one + noun*, is followed by a singular verb:

- 1) More than one person has (has/have) died in the accident.
- 2) More than one student gets (get/gets) first class.
- 3) More than one minister is (is/are) responsible for the tragedy.
- 4) More than one guest comes (come/comes) for inauguration.

11. In sentences beginning with *there*, the verb agrees with the real subject which follows it:

- 1) There is (is/are) **a man** at the door.
- 2) There are (is/are) **many men** at the door.
- 3) There are (is/are) **many girls** in my class.
- 4) There are (is/are) **plenty of pins** in the drawer.