Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is when the subject and verb align, meaning the subject and the verb will either both be singular or plural. These parts of the sentence must be consistent; however, there are a few exceptions to the subject-verb agreement rule which will be explained in this resource. This resource will help you identify the structure types and assist you in recognizing the subject and verb within a sentence.

Definitions

A is the main person, place, or thing in a sentence, which acts on an object. A verb is a word

Rules

Example: Neither are present at the show.

Example: The or her friends are focused on the assignment.

In both of these examples, the subjects “girl or her friends” and “mother nor any of my teachers” include both a singular and a plural noun. Therefore, by looking at the subject closest to the verb, “friends” in the first example will be followed by the plural form of “to be,” which is “are.” Similarly, by looking at the subject closest to the verb in the latter example, “teachers,” the verb used should be the plural form of “to be,” which is “are.”

4. Sometimes many words, or a phrase, will separate the subject from the verb. Keeping this in mind, the verb must still agree with the subject, not any of the other words within the phrase.

Example: The who has worked at the company for three years, is hardworking.

Example: , students at the University, are soccer players.

In both of these examples, there are phrases which separate the subject from the verb. Therefore, in the first example, “is” is the correct singular from of “to be,” agreeing with the subject “manager.” Similarly, the plural verb “are” agrees with the subject “Payton and Carly” although it is separated by a

Exceptions

The rules listed above show singular subjects followed by singular verbs and plural subjects followed by plural verbs. However, there are a few exceptions to the previously mentioned rules.

2. When referring to a certain amount of money, use a singular verb; however, if you are trying to explain the overall concept of dollars, use a plural verb.

Example: is not enough to buy a Starbucks coffee.

Example: are a monetary unit used in the U.S. and many other countries.

3. Sometimes a subject will follow a verb. For instance, such is the case in sentences beginning with "there is" or "there are." The word "there" is not considered the subject of the sentence, so often times,

Practice Exercises

Choose the correct from of the verb to agree with the subject. The answers are located at the bottom right-hand corner of the page.

1. The prom committee (decide/decides) who the prom kind and queen will be.
2. One hundred dollars (is/are) enough to buy a lot of Christmas presents.
3. There (is/are) many fish in the sea.
4. He and his family (plan/plans) on vacationing in the Caribbean Islands.
5. My sister, who has trained for Nationals for years, (is/are) a great dancer.
6. The girls (like/likes) dressing their American Girl dolls to match their own outfits.
7. There (is/ are) a choice you have to make about your future career.

1. decides 2. is 3. are 4. plan 5. is 6. like 7. is

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.

Sources Consulted: Purdue Owl, guidetogrammar.org, “Editing Line by Line”