

Subject/Verb Agreement

A singular subject needs a singular verb, and a plural subject needs a plural verb. (Reminder: The verb is the action word in the sentence. The subject is who or what does the action.)

Subjects and verbs must work together. They must agree. A verb that ends in a single -s, -es, or -ies is used with a singular noun.

Examples

<u>Singular Subject</u>	<u>Singular Verb</u>
Old Dan	bellows
Little Ann	shares
Fire	glows
Mama	fixes

A verb that **does not** end in a single s, es, or ies is used with a plural noun.

Examples

<u>Plural Subject</u>	<u>Plural Verb</u>
Old Dan and Little Ann	bellow
The coon hounds	share
The two fires	glow
Billy's parents	fix

- The raccoon [singular subject] jumps [singular verb] into the sycamore tree.
- The raccoons [plural subject] jump [plural verb] into the sycamore tree.
- Little Ann [singular subject] is [singular verb] kind.
- Little Ann and Old Dan [plural subject] are [plural verb] kind.

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subjectverbagreement/](http://www.brainpop.com/english/grammar/subjectverbagreement/)

No big deal? Usually not. Here are a few rules just in case you find yourself confused.

**Don't be confused by
plural words that
come after the verb.**

Wrong

Billy's biggest problem are the many sleepless nights.

Right

Billy's biggest problem [singular subject] is [singular verb] the many sleepless nights.

Which is correct?

- a) The hound search for mountain lions.
- b) The hound searches for mountain lions.

Correct

b) The hound searches for mountain lions.

hound searches

Which is correct?

- a) Old Dan see raccoons.
- b) Old Dan sees raccoons.

Correct

b) Old Dan sees raccoons.

Old Dan sees

Don't be confused by plural words that come between a singular subject and the verb.

Wrong

The topic of these books are dogs.

Right

The **topic** [singular subject] of these books **is** [singular verb] dogs.

Wrong

Each of the dogs hunt well.

Right

Each [singular subject] of the dogs
hunts [singular verb] well.

Wrong

Every one of the members of both hunting teams are here.

Right

Every one [singular subject] of the members of both hunting teams **is** [singular verb] here.

Which is correct?

- a) Each of the traps needs to be set.
- b) Each of the traps need to be set.

Correct

a) Each of the traps needs to be set.

Each needs

Which is correct?

- a) The boy in the brown shoes wants a lollipop.
- b) The boy in the brown shoes want a lollipop.

Correct

a) The boy in the brown shoes wants a lollipop.

Boy wants

Don't be confused by phrases such as along with, together with, accompanied by, as well as, including and in addition to.

Wrong

Little Ann, as well as Old Dan, like
to hunt.

Right

Little Ann [singular subject] , as
well as Old Dan, likes [singular
verb] to hunt.

Wrong

Billy, in addition to all the other boys in the mountains, grow up loving hound dogs.

Right

Billy [singular subject], in addition to all the other boys in the mountains, grows [singular verb] up loving hound dogs.

Which is correct?

- a) Papa, as well as Mama, worries about Billy being out all night long.
- b) Papa, as well as Mama, worry about Billy being out all night long.

Correct

a) Papa, as well as Mama, worries about Billy being out all night long.

Papa worries

Which is correct?

- a) Cornbread, in addition to some warm milk, are good for puppies.
- b) Cornbread, in addition to some warm milk, is good for puppies.

Correct

b) Cornbread, in addition to some warm milk, is good for puppies.

Cornbread is

**Don't be confused by
either/or and neither/nor.**

Neither Billy nor Little Ann knows
which way the raccoon ran.

(Both parts are singular, so use a
singular verb.)

Neither the boys nor the girls
know which way the raccoon
ran.

(Both parts are plural, so use a
plural verb.)

Neither the dogs nor Billy knows
which way the raccoon ran.

(One part is plural and one part is
singular. The singular part
comes right before the verb, so
use a singular verb.)

Neither Billy nor the hounds know
which way the raccoon ran.

(One part is plural and one part is
singular. The plural part comes
right before the verb, so use a
plural verb.)

Wrong

Either Little Ann or Old Dan hunt during the heat of the summer.

Right

Either Little Ann or Old Dan hunts during the heat of the summer.

Which is correct?

- a) Neither the boys or their mother sings in the church choir.
- b) Neither the boys or their mother sing in the church choir.

Correct

a) Neither the boys or their mother sings in the church choir.

Mother sings

Which is correct?

- a) Either Grandpa or Billy grind corn at the general store.
- b) Either Grandpa or Billy grinds corn at the general store.

Correct

b) Either Grandpa or Billy grinds corn at the general store.

Either (one) grinds

**Don't be confused by
noun phrases referring to
a single unit.**

Sometimes a noun phrase sounds plural but describes something we think of as a single unit.

These noun phrases take a singular verb.

Spaghetti and meatballs is [singular] my favorite dinner.

Ice cream and cake is [singular] my favorite dessert.

Wrong

Peanut butter and jelly are Billy's favorite sandwich.

Right

Peanut butter and jelly is Billy's favorite sandwich.

Which is correct?

- a) Macaroni and cheese is a healthy food.
- b) Macaroni and cheese are a healthy food.

Correct

a) Macaroni and cheese is a healthy food.

**Don't be confused by
nouns that look plural
but are actually singular.**

The **news** [singular] of the coon hunt **spreads** through the town.

Mumps [singular] **makes** one's cheeks hurt and causes swelling and fever.

Mathematics [singular] **is** my best subject in school.

Which is correct?

- a) Measles is contagious.
- b) Measles are contagious.

Correct

a) Measles is contagious.

**Don't be confused by
nouns of amount.**

Use a singular verb with sums of money or periods of time.

Wrong

Five hundred dollars are a lot of money.

Right

Five hundred dollars is a lot of money.

Wrong

Three hours are a long time to wait.

Right

Three hours is a long time to wait.

Which is correct?

- a) **Forty dollars** buy two coon hounds.
- b) **Forty dollars** buys two coon hounds.

Correct

b) Forty dollars buys two coon hounds.

Which is correct?

- a) Two years totals a long time for Billy to save his money.
- b) Two years total a long time for Billy to save his money.

Correct

- a) **Two years totals** a long time for Billy to save his money.

Practice – Number your paper from 1 to 15. Write the correct answer for each of the following items.

1. Billy (fix, fixes) breakfast before heading home.

2. The boy pup (play, plays) with the girl pup.

3. Each of the names (sound, sounds) perfect to Billy's ears.

4. With his extra money, Billy (buy, buys) gifts for his family.

5. Ma (cry, cries) with relief when she sees that Billy is safe.

6. Billy names the boy pup Old Dan. He (like, likes) the sound of the name.

7. Billy tells his sisters about the soda pop. It (taste, tastes) sweet and bubbly.

8. The fire escape was a pipe that ran up the side of the building. It (appear, appears) funny-looking.

9. Little Ann was the smartest of the two hounds. She (guide, guides) Old Dan out of trouble.

10. Papa easily forgives Billy for running off. He (know, knows) he would have done the same thing at Billy's age.

11. Which of the following is written correctly?

- a) Billy want to go to school.
- b) Grandpa loves to tease Billy.
- c) Daisy give milk each day.
- d) Papa please Mama with a hug.

12. Which of the following sentences does not contain a mistake?

- a) She eat the candy one piece at a time.
- b) News spread quickly through the mountains.
- c) Neither Billy or his grandpa like eating raw eggs .
- d) Wilson Rawls narrates a wonderful story!

13. Choose the answer that is written correctly.

- a) One of the dogs bellows through the night.
- b) The woman with all the dogs talk to Billy at the store.
- c) The boy on the playground fight Billy.
- d) Everybody play games in the schoolyard.

14. Which of the following sentences does not contain a mistake?

- a) The family love to eat dinner at 6:00 P.M.
- b) Everyone sees Billy in his overalls.
- c) An old K. C. Baking Powder can fill to the top with coins.
- d) Billy count his money every day until he has enough to buy the pups.

15. Choose the answer that is written correctly.

- a) Each day brings a new joy to Billy.
- b) Either Little Ann or Old Dan play games through the woods going home.
- c) Billy love his grandpa.
- d) It sound like the mountain lion would cry all night long.

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