

## Topic: Subject-Verb Agreement

Course: English B

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME (SLO):** Paragraphs should use basic rules of grammar, spelling, and punctuation so that the writer's ideas are clearly communicated.

**DLA OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE:** Student will be able to avoid errors in subject-verb agreement in written assignments.

**TIME NEEDED TO COMPLETE: 30-45 minutes** (You'll need to complete the independent activity IN THE WRITING CENTER, so be sure you've allotted enough time to do so.)

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Get DLA handout, look over directions, go to a work station (computer, desk) to complete the independent activity, and then sign up with a tutor to review the activity.

### INDEPENDENT ACTIVITY (20-30 minutes):

- A. Review rules for Subject-Verb Agreement online and test out your skills by doing an online exercise:

Explanation and rules: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/599/01/>

Practice Exercise: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/5/13/34/>

OR

Explanation and rules: [http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/sv\\_agr.htm](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/sv_agr.htm)

Practice Quiz: [http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/cgi-shl/quiz.pl/agreement\\_add2.htm](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/cgi-shl/quiz.pl/agreement_add2.htm)

Practice Quiz: <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/quizzes/svagr2.htm>



- B. Review the attached handout **"Making Subjects and Verbs Agree"** and take the online practice exercise (URL is given in the handout). Use the online practice exercise to identify which, if any, areas are still giving you trouble.
- C. Once you've identified your own trouble spots, locate the sections of the attached exercise **"Correcting Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement"** that deal with those trouble spots specifically. Complete only those sections.

### REVIEW WITH TUTOR: (10-15 minutes)

- 1) Go over your answers to **"Correcting Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement"** with the tutor.
- 2) With assistance from the tutor, identify and review any of the subject-verb agreement trouble spots that might still be giving you problems.
- 3) If you have an essay from class with subject-verb agreement errors, identify which trouble spots they reflect, and correct them with help from the tutor. If you don't have an essay, write a correct sentence to illustrate each of your own trouble spots. In the sentence, give a

fact about El Camino College, underline the subject once and the verb twice. Be prepared to explain to the tutor why your sentence is correct.

*Example:*      There are two sections of English B at the same time on Tuesday.



The word *There* is never a subject. First I find the verb, which is *are*, and then I ask “who or what are?” The answer is *sections*. In this case, the subject *sections* comes after verb *are* as described in Trouble Spot#2.

**DLA: Subject Verb Agreement**

**Level: English B**


Student Name \_\_\_\_\_


Date \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** You must complete all of the items in the Independent Activity portion of this DLA before meeting with a tutor for the Review. If your instructor wants evidence of this completed DLA, return this form to him or her with the tutor’s signature included.

## MAKING SUBJECTS AND VERBS AGREE

**DEFINITION of Subject-Verb Agreement:** A verb and its subject must match in number. If the verb is plural, the subject must be plural. If the verb is singular, then the subject must be singular.

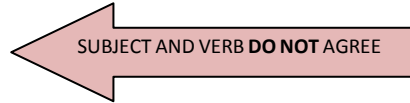
Singular = one 

Plural = more than one 



**Incorrect:** The boys is in my class.

The subject **boys** is plural (more than one ), but the verb **is** is singular (just one .



**Correct:** The boy is in my class.

The singular subject (just one ) matches with the singular verb (just one .



**Correct:** The boys are in my class.

The plural subject (more than one ) matches with the plural verb (more than one .



### 2 HELPFUL HINTS for locating the subject and the verb in a sentence:

1. In most English sentences, the subject comes before the verb.

S   V  
John sat at the desk.

S   V  
Van enrolled in a speech class.

S   V  
Laura felt sick.

2. To find the subject of a sentence, first find the verb and then ask who or what does it.

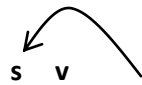
- a. The verb is easier to spot because it's usually an action and it changes form to show tense (sit/sat, enroll/enrolled, feel/felt).

**John sat at the desk.**

**What's the action? answer = sat (VERB)**

**Who or what sat? answer = John (SUBJECT)**

- b. Verbs like *is*, *am*, *was*, *were*, *are*, and *seems* are called "linking verbs." They don't show action, but they do change form to show tense (is/was, seems/seemed). Linking verbs join the subject to a word that renames or describes it.



Sue is president of the club. “president” renames Sue (SUBJECT)



Devonne seemed unhappy at the news. “unhappy” describes Devonne (SUBJECT)

### TROUBLE SPOTS:

#### 1. The subject seems plural but is considered singular.

These words are always singular:

##### -ONE words

anyone  
everyone  
someone  
no one

##### -BODY words

anybody  
everybody  
somebody  
nobody

##### -THING words

anything  
everything  
something  
nothing

each

either

neither

Everyone loves to get an “A” on a test.

Nobody wants to tell Joe the bad news.

These words end in –s but are considered singular:

An amount of money: A million dollars is a lot of cash.

Words that end in –ics: Mathematics is my hardest subject.

Words that have no ending other than –s: The news was on the television.

Words that refer to groups are usually considered singular because the members of the group act as one unit.


board class corporation faculty family jury senate team union

The board routinely approves all of the president’s recommendations.

2. The subject comes after the verb. (Remember, to see if subjects and verbs agree, find the verb first and then ask “who or what does it?” to find the subject.)

v                      s


QUESTION: Where are my textbooks?

What is the verb? answer = are 

Who or what *are*? answer = textbooks 

v                      s

SENTENCE THAT STARTS WITH *THERE* OR *HERE*: There are fifteen questions on the quiz.


What is the verb? answer = are 

Who or what *are*? answer = questions 

 **TIP:** ~~There~~ and ~~Here~~ will NEVER BE SUBJECTS.

v                      s

SENTENCE THAT STARTS WITH A PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE: Around the corner comes the bus.

What is the verb? answer = comes 

Who or what *comes*? answer = bus 

{  
PREPOSITIONAL  
PHRASE

**COMMON PREPOSITIONS:**

about	because of	except	of	to
above	before	for	off	toward
across	behind	from	on	under
after	below	in	out	until
against	beside	inside	outside	up
along	between	into	over	upon
among	by	like	past	with
around	down	near	since	within
at	during	next to	through	without

3. Words come between the subject and the verb.

 Each ~~of my friends~~ attends a different college.

 One ~~of my cousins~~ attends L A City College.

 The woman ~~who has five dogs and twelve cats~~ was evicted from her house. 

Remember:

***Each*** and ***One*** are ALWAYS singular.





4. The sentence has more than one subject.

**“AND/OR” RULES:**

- a. **AND:** Subjects joined by *and* are plural and always take a plural verb.

  Diet and exercise are keys to good health.

- b. **OR:** When subjects are joined by *or*, the verb agrees with the nearest subject.

Flowers  or  candy makes a nice gift. **BUT** Candy  or  flowers make a nice gift.

5. The same subject can be singular or plural depending on how it's used.

These words can be singular or plural depending on what word they refer to:



all

any




none

some

**SINGULAR** if refer to something that's singular:









  All of the milk is now on the floor. (*All* refers to *milk*, which is singular)





**PLURAL** if refer to something that's plural:





   All of my friends are going to the basketball game. (*All* refers to *friends*, which is plural)

**HINT:** Ask yourself “All of what?” or “Some of what?” See if the answer is singular or plural.


6. The verb is a tricky form of **BE** (is, am, are), **HAVE** (has, have) or **DO** (does, do).

BE Verbs PRESENT TENSE (Happening Now)		BE Verbs PAST TENSE (Happening before Now)	
Singular Subject 	Singular Verb 	Singular Subject 	Singular Verb 
I	am	I	was
you	are	you	were
he/she/it	is	he/she/it	was
Plural Subject 	Plural Verb 	Plural Subject 	Plural Verb 
we	are	we	were
you	are	you	were
they	are	they	were

HAVE Verbs PRESENT TENSE (Happening Now)	
Singular Subject 	Singular Verb 
I	have
you	have
he/she/it	has
Plural Subject 	Plural Verb 
we	have
you	have
they	have

DO Verbs PRESENT TENSE (Happening Now)	
Singular Subject 	Singular Verb 
I	do
you	do
he/she/it	does
Plural Subject 	Plural Verb 
we	do
you	do
they	do

### TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- Test your understanding of the rules by completing an online exercise:  [http://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=subjectverb-agreement-exercise\\_3](http://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=subjectverb-agreement-exercise_3)
- Use the exercise as a guide to let you know which—if any--of the trouble spots are still causing you problems. Then you can review only the items you don't know.
- Each item in the exercise will tell you which of the trouble spots it deals with. Circle the Trouble Spots associated with any of the items you missed (some items may have two trouble spots identified):

TROUBLE SPOT 1

TROUBLE SPOT 2

TROUBLE SPOT 3

TROUBLE SPOT 4

TROUBLE SPOT 5

TROUBLE SPOT 6

## Correcting Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

**Instructions:** Use this exercise to work on only those areas that are giving you trouble. Skip the others. Correct each sentence that contains an error in subject-verb agreement. One sentence in each group is correct. Put a "C" next to it.

### **Trouble Spot 1: The subject seems plural but is considered singular.**

1. The basketball team are going to play for the state championship.
2. Nobody in the entire class understand the assignment.
3. Neither of my little brothers believe in Santa Claus.
4. Measles are not a common disease today in America.
5. Each of my sisters plans to go to an out-of-state college.

### **Trouble Spot 2: The subject comes after the verb.**

1. Where is the computer labs on this campus?
2. There was only three open spaces in the parking garage this morning.
3. On the instructor's desk are piles of student papers.
4. Here is the vintage t-shirts I ordered.
5. Which is your favorite rides at Knott's Berry Farm?

### **Trouble Spot 3: Words come between the subject and the verb.**

1. My aunt, along with my uncle and my four cousins, are arriving on Tuesday.
2. The dog from the greyhound rescue organization seems very nervous.
3. People who frequently travel by plane is able to earn a lot of free miles.
4. Strong gusts of hot wind from the desert creates Santa Ana conditions.
5. Habits like eating healthy food and getting plenty of exercise is good for all of us.

### **Trouble Spot 4: The sentence has more than one subject.**

1. The Boy Scouts or their leader are delivering meals to the homeless.
2. Music and soft lights calms my baby sister.
3. Both Martin and his best friend are applying to Loyola Marymount University.
4. Chili or fries goes great with a hot dog.
5. Elderly people and small children shares some common traits.

### **Trouble Spot 5: The same subject can be singular or plural depending on how it's used.**

1. All of her questions is driving me crazy.
2. Some of the responsibility is mine.
3. Any of the people in the crowd is in danger of arrest.
4. None of the old coins is worth a lot of money.
5. Some of the professor's rules seems unfair.

### **Trouble Spot 6: The verb is a tricky form of *Be*, *Have*, or *Do*.**

1. John be my best friend.
2. My mom always do the grocery shopping on Tuesday.
3. My uncle make the best barbecued ribs.
4. My cousins are constantly playing online games.
5. During the holidays, the malls is always crazy.