

## Subject/Verb Agreement

The basic rule regarding subject and verb agreement is that a singular subject should have a singular verb, and a plural subject should have a plural verb. Most nouns are made plural by adding and *s* to the singular form of the word. There are exceptions, of course. You can refer to the plurals section to learn more about plural nouns.

The easiest way to determine if a verb is plural or not is to ask yourself whether the verb you are seeing would normally be used with *he*, *she*, or *they*. If the verb can be used with *he* or *she*, then it is singular. If it is used with *they*, it is plural. For example, think of *eat* and *eats*. Which one is the plural verb? He eat? She eat? They eat? *They eat* is correct, so *eat* would be a plural verb in this example. He eats? She eats? They eats? *He eats* and *she eats* are both correct, so *eats* would be a singular verb in this example.

If there are two subjects in the sentence and one of them is plural, then a plural verb should be used.

Example: Rachel and her friends sleep a lot.

*Rachel* is a singular subject, but *her friends* is plural. Therefore, we have to use the plural verb *sleep* instead of the singular verb *sleeps*.

When there is a clause in the sentence, it can make it more difficult to determine whether the subject and verb agree or not.

Example: Robert, one of many dentists, works long hours.

When reading the sentence above to check for subject and verb agreement, it is easier to read the sentence without reading the clause. Since the clause is separated by commas, we would simply read the sentence without reading the words between the commas. Robert works long hours. Do the subject and verb agree? Yes, they do. By dropping out the clause when reading the sentence, it is easier to prevent mistakes. If we had read the word *dentists*, we may have mistakenly thought that a plural verb was necessary. The words in a clause do not determine what type of verb is used.

Whenever you are trying to determine if a subject and verb agree, determine what the subject is first. After finding the subject, find the verb in the sentence. Once you have found both the subject and the verb, read the two together to see if they make sense.

Example: Bob, one of the band members, plays guitar.

Bob, one of the band members, play guitar.

In the first sentence, the subject is Bob. The verb is plays. If you omit all of the other words and say "Bob plays," this phrase makes sense. In the second sentence, the subject is Bob, and the verb is play. If you say "Bob play," the phrase does not make sense. In the first sentence, the subject and verb agree. In the second sentence, they do not.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Subject/Verb Agreement Questions

**Please circle the correct verb:**

1. Sally is/are on the phone.
2. Phil and his cats was/were moving to a new town.
3. The band members likes/like large crowds.
4. Harry and Sam plays/play basketball every Saturday.
5. He don't/doesn't know the correct answer.
6. They never went/goes on a nice vacation.
7. With practice, she will becomes/become a good singer.
8. Paula and her mother argue/argues a lot.
9. She have/has seven siblings.
10. They am/are going to big game.
11. Tim and I rides/ride to school on the same bus.
12. Tomorrow, I am/will clean my room.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Subject/Verb Agreement Answers

**Please circle the correct verb:**

1. Sally **is**/are on the phone.
2. Phil and his cats was/**were** moving to a new town.
3. The band members likes/**like** large crowds.
4. Harry and Sam plays/**play** basketball every Saturday.
5. He don't/**doesn't** know the correct answer.
6. They never **go**/goes on a nice vacations.
7. With practice, she will becomes/**become** a good singer.
8. Paula and her mother **argue**/argues a lot.
9. She have/**has** seven siblings.
10. They am/**are** going to big game.
11. Tim and I rides/**ride** to school on the same bus.
12. Tomorrow, I am/**will** clean my room.