## Agreement of Subject and Verb

The verb in every sentence or clause must agree with its person in subject and number. If you can recognize the subject and the verb, you should be able to make the two agree.

### Intervening Phrases (words placed between the subject and the verb)
The choice of singular or plural verb is determined entirely by the number of the subject. Ignore words or phrases between the subject and the verb.

- The evidence he submitted to the judges was (not were) convincing.  
  *(Evidence is the subject of the verb was.)*  

- The new library with its many books and its quiet reading rooms fills (not fill) a long-felt need.  
  *(Library is the subject of the fills; the phrase with its many books has nothing to do with the verb.)*

### Verb Preceding the Subject
In some sentences the verb precedes the subject. The reversal of common order frequently leads to error in agreement.

- There is (not are) in many countries much unrest today.  
  *(Unrest is the subject of the verb is.)*  

- There are (not is) a table, two couches, four chairs, and a desk.  
  *(Table, couches, chairs, and desk are the compound subject of the verb are.)*  

- Where are (not is) Bob and his friends going?  
  *(Bob and friends are subjects of the verb are going.)*

### Indefinite Pronouns
The indefinite pronouns *either, neither, and each*, as well as such compounds as *everybody, anybody, everyone, anyone*, are always singular. *None* may be singular or plural although the singular usage is more common.

- Each of the plans has (not have) its advantages.  
- Everyone who heard the speech was (not were) impressed by it.  
- Every bud, stalk, flower, and seed reveals (not reveal) a workmanship beyond the power of man.  
- Is (not are) either of you ready to report?  
- None of the three is (or are) ready to go.  
- None—no, not one—is prepared.  
- None of the men has (or have) brought a raincoat.
### Compound Subjects

Compound subjects joined by *and* normally require a plural verb.

| Correctness and precision are required in all good writing. Where *are* the books and papers? |
| Note: When nouns joined by *and* are thought of as a unit, the verb is normally singular. |
| The sum and substance of the matter *is* (not *are*) hardly worth considering. My friend and co-worker Mr. Jones *has* (not *have*) gone abroad. |

### Subjects joined by OR and NOR

Singular subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a singular verb. If one subject, however, is singular and one is plural, the verb agrees in number and person with the subject closest to the verb.

| Either the coach or the player *was* (not *were*) at fault. |
| Neither the cat nor the kittens *have been fed*. |
| (The plural word kittens in the compound subject stands next to the verb *have been fed.*) |
| Neither the kittens nor the cat *has been fed*. |
| (The singular subject cat stands next to the verb, which is therefore singular.) |
| Neither my brothers nor *I* am *going*. |
| (Note that the verb agrees with the nearer subject in person as well as in number.) |

### Nouns Plural in Form

As a general rule use a singular verb with nouns that are plural in form but singular in meaning.

| The following nouns are usually singular in meaning: news, economics, ethics, physics, mathematics, gallows, mumps, measles, shambles, and whereabouts. |
| The *news* was eagerly received. |
| Measles is a contagious disease. |
| The following nouns are usually plural: gymnastics, tactics, trousers, scissors, athletics, tidings, acoustics, riches, and barracks. |
| Athletics attract him. |
| The scissors are sharp. |
| Riches often take wing and fly away. |

Plural nouns describing a mass, a quantity, or a number require a singular verb when the subject is regarded as a unit.

| Five dollars *is* too much for her to pay. |
| Fifty bushels *was* all the bin would hold. |
Notes Regarding Phrases and Expressions

Phrases involving addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division of numbers normally take the singular:

- Two and two is four.
- Twelve divided by six is two.

In expressions like part of the apple, some of the pie, and all of the money, the choice of singular or plural verb is determined by the number of the noun in the prepositional phrase.

- Some of the pie is missing.
- Some of the pies are missing.

Subject and Complement of TO BE Verbs
When one noun precedes and another noun follows a form of the verb to be, the first noun is the subject, and the verb agrees with it and not with the complement, even if the complement is different in number.

- The only fruit on the market is peaches.
- Peaches are the only fruit on the market.

Relative Pronoun as Subject
When a relative pronoun (who, which, or that) is used as the subject of a clause, the number and person of the verb are determined by the antecedent of the pronoun, the word to which the pronoun refers.

- This is the student who is to be promoted.
  (The antecedent of who is the singular noun student; therefore, who is singular.)
- These are the students who are to be promoted.
  (The antecedent of who is the plural noun students.)
- Should I, who am a stranger, be allowed to enter the contest?
  (Who refers to I; I is the first person, singular number.)
- She is one of these irresponsible persons who are always late.
  (The antecedent of who is persons.)

Collective Nouns
Some nouns are singular in form but plural in meaning. They are called collective nouns and include such words as team, class, committee, crowd, and crew. These nouns may take either a singular or plural verb: if you are thinking of the group as a unit, you must use a singular verb; if you are thinking of the individual members of the group, you must use a plural verb.

- The crew is striking for higher pay. (The crew is acting as a unit.)
- The crew are writing reports of the shipwreck. (The members of the crew are acting individually.)