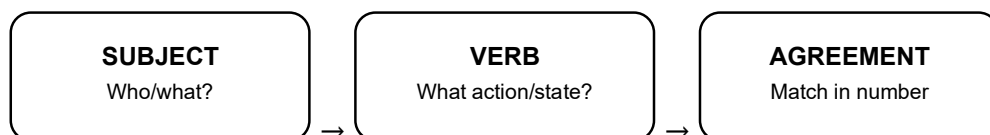


SUBJECT–VERB AGREEMENT

Middle School Grammar Guide



SUBJECT	VERB	THE GOLDEN IDEA
The person, animal, place, thing, or idea doing the action or being described.	The action word or state-of-being word.	A singular subject usually takes a singular verb; a plural subject usually takes a plural verb.

Quick contrast: The boy **runs**. / The boys **run**. The subject changes from singular to plural, so the verb changes too.

Important: In the present tense, the third-person singular form often ends in **-s/-es** (he walks, she watches), while plural subjects usually take the base form (they walk, they watch).

Part 1 — Agreement Rules

Rule 1. Singular subject → singular verb

A singular subject needs a singular verb. In the simple present tense, this often means the verb ends in **-s** or **-es**.

Examples	Why?
The girl plays chess.	girl = singular
My brother watches TV.	brother = singular

Remember: Do not be confused by the **-s**: in the present tense, the singular subject usually causes the verb to take **-s/-es**.

Rule 2. Plural subject → plural verb

A plural subject usually takes the base form of the verb in the simple present tense.

Examples	Why?
The girls play chess.	girls = plural
My brothers watch TV.	brothers = plural

Remember: Compare: **He plays** but **They play**.

Examples	Why?
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Neither the teacher nor the students are late.	nearer subject = students
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Rule 3. Two subjects joined by AND usually take a plural verb

When two subjects are joined by **and** and refer to separate people or things, use a plural verb.

Examples	Why?
Riya and Aman are ready.	two people
The teacher and the students work together.	more than one subject

Remember: The word **and** often signals a plural subject.

Rule 4. AND can describe one person or one thing

Sometimes two nouns joined by **and** name one person, one thing, or one combined idea. Then a singular verb is used.

Examples	Why?
Bread and butter is my usual breakfast.	one combined meal/idea
The poet and author is speaking.	one person with two roles

Remember: Ask: "Are these really two separate subjects, or one unit?"

Rule 5. OR / NOR: agree with the nearer subject

When singular and plural subjects are joined by **or**, **nor**, **either...or**, **neither...nor**, the verb usually agrees with the subject nearer to it.

Examples	Why?
Neither the students nor the teacher is late.	nearer subject = teacher

Remember: This is called the **proximity rule**.

Rule 6. Ignore words between subject and verb

A phrase placed between the subject and verb does not change the agreement. Find the real subject first.

Examples	Why?
The box of old books is heavy.	subject = box, not books
The students in our class are helpful.	subject = students

Remember: Mentally remove the middle phrase: *The box is heavy.*

Rule 7. Collective nouns: one group acting together → singular

A collective noun such as *team, class, family, committee* can take a singular verb when the group acts as one unit.

Examples	Why?
The team is winning.	one team acting together
The committee has reached a decision.	one group, one decision

Remember: This guide follows standard school-grammar usage.

Rule 8. Collective noun acting as individuals → plural (where appropriate)

If members of a collective group are acting separately, a plural verb can be used, especially in British/Commonwealth usage.

Examples	Why?
The family are arguing among themselves.	members act separately
The committee are divided in their opinions.	individual members are emphasised

Remember: For school writing, follow the convention your textbook or teacher uses.

Rule 9. Indefinite pronouns ending in -one, -body, -thing are singular

Words such as *everyone, someone, nobody, anybody, everything* are grammatically singular.

Examples	Why?
Everyone is welcome.	everyone = singular
Nobody knows the answer.	nobody = singular

Remember: Even though *everyone* refers to many people, the pronoun is grammatically singular.

Rule 10. Each / Every → singular verb

Each and **every** focus on members one at a time, so they take singular verbs.

Examples	Why?
Each student has a notebook.	each = one at a time
Every child needs care.	every = each individual

Remember: Use **each/every + singular noun + singular verb.**

Part 1 — Agreement Rules (continued)

Rule 11. Either / Neither → singular verb when used alone

When **either** or **neither** is used as a pronoun by itself, it is normally singular.

Examples	Why?
Either is fine.	one of two
Neither was correct.	not one and not the other

Remember: Do not confuse this with **either...or** / **neither...nor**.

Rule 12. Amounts of time, money, distance or measurement as one unit → singular

A single total amount or measurement is treated as one unit and takes a singular verb.

Examples	Why?
Ten kilometres is a long walk.	one distance
Five hundred rupees is enough.	one amount

Remember: If the words refer to separate items, agreement may change.

Rule 13. Fractions and percentages depend on the noun after OF

With expressions such as *half of*, *some of*, *most of*, *60% of*, the verb agrees with the noun after **of**.

Examples	Why?
Half of the cake is gone.	cake = singular
Half of the students are absent.	students = plural

Remember: Look after **of**: that noun usually tells you the number.

Rule 14. Some / All / Most / None depend on the noun after OF

These words do not automatically take one fixed verb. Check the noun after **of**.

Examples	Why?
Some of the water is cold.	water = uncountable singular
Some of the apples are ripe.	apples = plural

Remember: Use the same check: **What comes after of?**

Rule 15. Titles of books, films, subjects, etc. → singular

A title may look plural because it contains a plural word, but the title as a whole names one work or subject.

Examples	Why?
"The Arabian Nights" is a famous collection.	one title
"Mathematics" is my favourite subject.	one school subject

Remember: Treat the title as one name.

Rule 16. Names of countries, organisations and places → singular

A name referring to one country, organisation, city, or institution normally takes a singular verb.

Examples	Why?
The United States is a country.	one country
The United Nations is an international organisation.	one organisation

Remember: The grammatical form of the name does not always tell you the number.

Rule 17. News, mathematics, physics and similar nouns → singular

Some nouns end in **-s** but are treated as singular when they name a subject, field, or body of information.

Examples	Why?
The news is surprising.	news = singular noun
Physics is interesting.	school subject

Remember: Do not choose the verb just because the noun ends in -s.

Rule 18. Scissors, trousers, spectacles and similar nouns → plural

Some nouns normally come in pairs and take plural verbs. Use **a pair of** when you want a singular expression.

Examples	Why?
These scissors are sharp.	scissors = plural
A pair of scissors is on the desk.	pair = singular

Remember: The real subject in *a pair of scissors* is **pair**.

Rule 19. There is / There are: the real subject comes after the verb

In sentences beginning with **there is/are**, find the noun that follows the verb and make the verb agree with it.

Examples	Why?
There is a book on the table.	book = singular
There are three books on the table.	books = plural

Remember: Do not let *there* fool you: it is not the real subject.

Rule 20. Here is / Here are follows the same idea

With **here is/are**, the noun that follows determines the verb.

Examples	Why?
Here is your pencil.	pencil = singular
Here are your pencils.	pencils = plural

Remember: Think: *What is/are being presented?*

Rule 21. Relative pronouns: who/which/that follow the antecedent

In clauses beginning with **who, which, or that**, the verb agrees with the noun the pronoun refers to.

Part 1 — Agreement Rules (continued)

Examples	Why?
She is one of the students who work hard.	who refers to students
He is the student who works hard.	who refers to student

Remember: Identify the **antecedent**.

Rule 22. Gerunds used as subjects → singular

An **-ing** form used as a noun (a gerund) usually represents one activity or idea and takes a singular verb.

Examples	Why?
Swimming is good exercise.	one activity
Reading and writing are useful skills.	two activities joined by and

Remember: One gerund activity = singular; two separate gerunds joined by **and** = plural.

Rule 23. To-infinitive phrase as subject → singular

A phrase beginning with **to + verb** and functioning as the subject normally takes a singular verb.

Examples	Why?
To read regularly is a good habit.	one activity/idea
To travel alone requires confidence.	one idea

Remember: The whole infinitive phrase is treated as one idea.

Rule 24. Subjects ending in -s are not always plural

Some singular nouns end in **-s**, while some plural nouns do not. Decide by meaning and grammar, not spelling alone.

Examples	Why?
The news is encouraging.	news = singular
The children are playing.	children = plural

Remember: Never use “ends in -s = plural” as your only test.

Rule 25. Compound subjects with phrases such as **as well as** / **together with**

Words such as **as well as**, **together with**, **along with**, **including** do not make the main subject plural.

Examples	Why?
The captain, along with the players, is ready.	main subject = captain
Riya, as well as her friends, has arrived.	main subject = Riya

Remember: Treat the added phrase like extra information.

Part 2 — The 10-Second Agreement Check

When you are unsure, use this simple sequence:

STEP	DO THIS	ASK YOURSELF
1	Find the verb.	What action/state is being described?
2	Ask "Who or what?"	Find the true subject.
3	Ignore interruptions.	Phrases beginning with of, with, along with, etc. may distract you.
4	Decide the number.	Is the subject singular, plural, or a special case?
5	Match the verb.	Choose the form that agrees with the subject.

A useful mental trick

Cross out the distracting phrase mentally. For example: **The basket of mangoes is** on the table. The subject is **basket**, not mangoes.

Part 3 — Common Mistakes to Avoid

Incorrect	Correct	Reason
The list of names are long.	The list of names is long.	Subject = list.
Everyone know the answer.	Everyone knows the answer.	Everyone is singular.
Neither the boys nor the girl are ready.	Neither the boys nor the girl is ready.	Nearest subject = girl.
There is many reasons.	There are many reasons.	Real subject = reasons.
The news are good.	The news is good.	News is singular.
Rohan, along with his friends, are coming.	Rohan, along with his friends, is coming.	Main subject = Rohan.

Part 4 — Practice: Choose the Correct Verb

Choose the verb in brackets that agrees with the subject. Answers are provided at the end for self-checking.

1.	The basket of apples (is / are) on the table.
2.	My friends (enjoys / enjoy) science.
3.	Every student (has / have) a notebook.
4.	Neither the teacher nor the pupils (was / were) late.
5.	Neither the pupils nor the teacher (was / were) late.
6.	Ten minutes (is / are) enough.
7.	Some of the milk (is / are) spilled.
8.	Some of the books (is / are) missing.
9.	There (is / are) three pencils in the box.
10.	The news (is / are) surprising.
11.	A pair of shoes (is / are) under the bed.
12.	Reading and writing (is / are) important skills.
13.	The captain, along with the players, (is / are) ready.

14.	Everyone (know / knows) the rule.
15.	The team (is / are) celebrating together.

Part 5 — Answer Key with Quick Reasons

No.	Answer	Reason
1	is	subject = basket
2	enjoy	friends = plural
3	has	every student = singular
4	were	nearer subject = pupils
5	was	nearer subject = teacher
6	is	ten minutes = one amount of time
7	is	milk = uncountable singular
8	are	books = plural
9	are	real subject = three pencils
10	is	news = singular
11	is	subject = pair
12	are	two gerund activities joined by and
13	is	main subject = captain
14	knows	everyone = singular
15	is	team acting as one unit

Final Memory Card

Before choosing a verb, remember: **Find the subject** → **decide singular/plural** → **ignore distracting words** → **match the verb**.