

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subjects and verbs must agree with one another in number. In the present tense, a singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb. Below is a list of common subject-verb agreement rules.

Singular verbs end in -s.

Unlike nouns, the plural form of a verb is not made by adding an -s (or -es) to the ending. It's actually the opposite. For present-tense verbs, adding the -s to the end makes it singular. If the verb is plural, there is no -s ending used.

Singular Verbs

The **pilot flies** the airplane.

The **cloud drifts** through the air.

Plural Verbs

The **pilots fly** the airplane.

The **clouds drift** through the air.

Compound subjects with *and* take a plural verb.

A subject that is made up of two or more nouns is a compound subject. When the parts are connected by *and*, the subject is plural, so it takes a plural verb.

The **boy** *and* his **companion** **walk** along the pier.

The **athlete**, the **agent**, *and* the **owner** **agree** to the terms.

Subjects with singular nouns joined by *or* or *nor* take a singular verb.

Either the **dog** *or* the **cat** **goes** to the vet today.

Neither the **hiker** *nor* the **mountaineer** **needs** a map.

Subjects with a singular noun and a plural noun joined by *or* or *nor* take the verb that agrees with the closer noun.

Ted *or* his **parents** **walk** the dog daily.

Neither the **sailors** *nor* their **captain** **enjoys** a harsh storm.

Subjects are not in modifying phrases.

When the subject and the verb are separated by other words or phrases, make sure the verb agrees with the subject, not with a noun within the phrase.

One *of the packets* **contains** a surprise.

The **people** *along the boardwalk* **watch** the tourists.

The **man** *with all the dogs* **walks** about dizzily.

Don't let those phrases fool you.

Phrases using *with*, *together with*, *including*, *accompanied by*, *in addition to*, or *as well* do not change whether a subject is singular or plural. If the subject is singular, the verb should be as well.

The young **cadet**, *accompanied by his leader*, **runs** to the rescue.

The sea **captain**, *as well as his sailors*, **is** hungry for adventure.

Nouns with a plural form but with a singular meaning take singular verbs.

Nouns such as *United States*, *civics*, *mathematics*, *measles*, and *news* take singular verbs.

The **United States** **contains** many people.

The **news** **is** good.

Nouns such as *scissors*, *tweezers*, *trousers*, *jeans*, and *shears* take plural verbs.

These nouns may appear to have a singular meaning, but each of these things is made up of two parts.

Trousers **make** the man.

Tweezers **are** nifty tools.

Collective nouns *usually* take singular verbs.

A collective noun has a singular form even though it refers to a group of individuals or things. Examples include *army*, *audience*, *crowd*, *group*, *team*, *committee*, *class*, and *family*. These nouns take a singular verb when the group acts as one unit.

The **team runs** around the track after practice.

The **committee elects** new members.

The **family goes** to the park.

However, a plural verb is used when people or things within a group act separately.

The retired **group have** gone their separate ways.

The **class disagree** on which method is best.

If the subject follows the verb, the subject and verb should still agree.

When the normal subject-verb order is inverted in a sentence, the verb still agrees with the subject. For example, in sentences beginning with *there* or *here*, the subject follows the verb. Since neither *there* nor *here* is ever the subject of a sentence, the verb agrees with the noun that follows the verb.

There are clues to be found.

Here is your **snack**.

Verb Tenses

The chart below lists the standard verb tenses with examples.

Simple tenses show that an action happens in the present, past, or future.

Present	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>1st Person</i>	I walk/draw	we walk/draw
<i>2nd Person</i>	you walk/draw	you walk/draw
<i>3rd Person</i>	he/she/it walks/draws	they walk/draw
Past	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>1st Person</i>	I walked/drew	we walked/drew
<i>2nd Person</i>	you walked/drew	you walked/drew
<i>3rd Person</i>	he/she/it walked/drew	they walked/drew
Future	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>1st Person</i>	I will walk/draw	we will walk/draw
<i>2nd Person</i>	you will walk/draw	you will walk/draw
<i>3rd Person</i>	he/she/it will walk/draw	they will walk/draw

Perfect tenses show that an action was or will be completed before another time or action.

Present Perfect	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>1st Person</i>	I have walked/drawn	we have walked/drawn
<i>2nd Person</i>	you have walked/drawn	you have walked/drawn
<i>3rd Person</i>	he/she/it has walked/drawn	they have walked/drawn
Past Perfect	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>1st Person</i>	I had walked/drawn	we had walked/drawn
<i>2nd Person</i>	you had walked/drawn	you had walked/drawn
<i>3rd Person</i>	he/she/it had walked/drawn	they had walked/drawn
Future Perfect	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>1st Person</i>	I will have walked/drawn	we will have walked/drawn
<i>2nd Person</i>	you will have walked/drawn	you will have walked/drawn
<i>3rd Person</i>	he/she/it will have walked/drawn	they will have walked/drawn

Progressive tenses show continuing action.

Present Progressive	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>1st Person</i>	I am walking/drawing	we are walking/drawing
<i>2nd Person</i>	you are walking/drawing	you are walking/drawing
<i>3rd Person</i>	he/she/it is walking/drawing	they are walking/drawing
Past Progressive	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>1st Person</i>	I was walking/drawing	we were walking/drawing
<i>2nd Person</i>	you were walking/drawing	you were walking/drawing
<i>3rd Person</i>	he/she/it was walking/drawing	they were walking/drawing
Future Progressive	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>1st Person</i>	I will be walking/drawing	we will be walking/drawing
<i>2nd Person</i>	you will be walking/drawing	you will be walking/drawing
<i>3rd Person</i>	he/she/it will be walking/drawing	they will be walking/drawing

Commonly Misused Verbs

Some verbs are easy to confuse. Because certain verbs may sound alike or may be spelled similarly, they are commonly misused. Learning the definitions of these verbs will help you use them correctly.

emigrate or immigrate?

emigrate

- Use **emigrate** to mean "to leave a country to live elsewhere." The past tense is **emigrated**.

example: Jean-Paul's family **emigrated** from Brazil after his mother got a new job in Sri Lanka.

immigrate

- Use **immigrate** to mean "to come to a country to live there." The past tense is **immigrated**.

example: In the past, people who **immigrated** to America had to stop at Ellis Island.

ensure or insure?

ensure

- Use **ensure** to mean "to make something sure, certain, or safe." The past tense is **ensured**.

example: I checked the label to **ensure** the bag was mine before leaving the airport with it.

insure

- Use **insure** to mean "to provide or obtain insurance on or for something." Insurance is an agreement between a person and a company in which the company pays money if something valuable is lost, stolen, or damaged. You can buy insurance for things such as cars, homes, and boats. Health insurance helps you make payments toward medical bills if you get sick. The past tense is **insured**.

example: My parents had to **insure** our new home to protect their financial investment.

adapt or adopt?

adapt

- Use **adapt** to mean "to change something so that it functions better or to change something so that it is better suited for a purpose." The past tense is **adapted**.

example: After a few years, you will learn to **adapt** to the long, cold winters in New England.

adopt

- Use **adopt** to mean "to take up and practice." The past tense is **adopted**.

example: While my broken arm was in a cast, I had to **adopt** a few new habits, such as writing with my left hand and bathing without getting my arm wet.

Examples...

Which verb or verb phrase best fits in the sentence below?

Squirrels, jays, and magpies _____ your peanuts if you don't hide your food.

- A. stealing
- B. will steal
- C. stolen
- D. steals

Which verb should be used in the sentence below?

Sara and Jane _____ their bikes to school every day.

- A. rides
- B. had rode
- C. ride
- D. have rode

Examples...

Which of the sentences below is written correctly?

- A. Dad and I is going to the store until he got a headache.
- B. Cathy were going to tell a secret before she left my house.
- C. Yvannia reads an entire book while at the pool yesterday.
- D. Carla and Aunt Rosa are taking me to the park tomorrow.

Which of the sentences below is written correctly?

- A. The first of six races were the shortest race of the entire event.
- B. The winners of the meet was given gold medals and special certificates.
- C. The coaches of each team cheers on all of the runners in each race.
- D. The volunteers for the track event wear shirts from the host school.