

ENGLISH



Subject-Verb Agreement and Finite and Non-Finite Verbs

What is Subject Verb Agreement?

Read the following sentences:



1) The book **is** kept on the shelf.

2) The books **are** kept on the shelf.



In Sentence 1, the subject **The book** agrees with the verb **is**. In Sentence 2, the subject **The books** agrees with the verb **are**. In Sentence 1, the subject is singular; hence, the verb is singular. In Sentence 2, the subject is plural; hence, the verb is also plural.

This agreement between the subject and the verb with respect to their number is known as **subject verb agreement or subject verb concord**. In simple words, we can say that when the subject is singular, the verb is singular; when the subject is plural, the verb is also plural.

Examples:

Subject	Verb
The bags	are packed.
Gayatri	works hard.
The bottles	were empty.
Dennis	cooks food.
The drains	are blocked.
The police	were called.

The **subject** of a sentence can be a noun, a pronoun or a gerund. The rules of agreement can be different for each.

Rules for Nouns

- **Uncountable nouns** will always agree with singular verbs.

Subject	Predicate
Lightning	strikes
Tea	is brewing.
Truth	triumphs.

- **Material nouns** will also agree with singular verbs.

Subject	Predicate
Cotton	is cultivated.
Gold	is expensive.
Bakelite	is a type of plastic.

- In a collective noun phrase, the headword will agree with the verb and not the noun which follows the preposition 'of'.

Subject	Predicate
A bundle of papers	was burnt.
A band of musicians	is performing.
Bunches of grapes	hang from the vines.

- However, some collective nouns will always agree with **plural verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
The police	arrive at the scene.
The public	vote today.
The poultry	are domesticated birds.
Vermin	spread infestation.

- Sometimes, it is the **actions** of the nouns in the collective noun which decides whether it agrees with a **singular verb** or a **plural verb**.
- If the **actions** are **united**, the collective noun will agree with a singular verb.

Subject	Predicate
The posse	was gathered by the sheriff.
The army	has launched an attack.
The colony of ants	gathers food.

- If the **actions** are **individualistic** (each member in the group performs separately) or if there is a **disagreement** or **discord** within the group, the collective noun will agree with a **plural verb**.

Subject	Predicate
The brood	cause havoc.
The party	spar over trivial things.

- If the noun is preceded by the phrase ‘**a pair of**’ or ‘**pairs of**’, the verb will agree with the headword ‘**pair**’ or ‘**pairs**’.

Subject	Predicate
The pair of trousers	is tight.
A pair of glasses	rests on the table.

Rules for Pronouns

- When the subject of the sentence is a **pronoun**, the verb agrees with the pronoun not only in **number** but also in **person**.
- **First person pronouns** always agree with **plural verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
I	am
I	know
I	hear

- **Second person pronouns** also agree with **plural verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
You	are called.
You	were missed.
You	speak now.

- **Singular third person pronouns** agree with **singular verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
She	is confident.
He	was upset.
It	grows.

- **Plural third person pronouns** agree with **plural verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
They	are talking.
They	have swum.
They	do their best.

- **Indefinite pronouns** take **singular verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
Something	sounds wrong.
Someone	calls me on this number.
Nothing	is difficult for the hero.
Everything	looks beautiful.
Either of you	is the new CEO.
Much	was needed.
None of you	has a choice.

Rules for Gerunds

- **Gerunds** usually agree with **singular verbs**.

Subject	Predicate
Drinking indiscriminately	is dangerous.
Apologising for your misconduct	is what I expected from you.
Painting	is my hobby.

Miscellaneous Rules for Agreement

And

- **Two nouns** joined by the conjunction '**and**' agree with a plural verb.

Noun	Conjunction	Noun	Verb
↓	↓	↓	↓
The neighbour	and	the secretary	live upstairs.

- If there is **no article** with the **second noun**, it means both the nouns function as a **single subject**. In that case, the verb is singular.

Noun	Conjunction	Noun	Verb
↓	↓	↓	↓
The neighbour	and	secretary	lives upstairs.

- In the above example, the subject is **singular**.
- This is because there is no article with the second noun '**secretary**'.
- It means the **neighbour** is also a **secretary**.

Along with, As well as, Together with

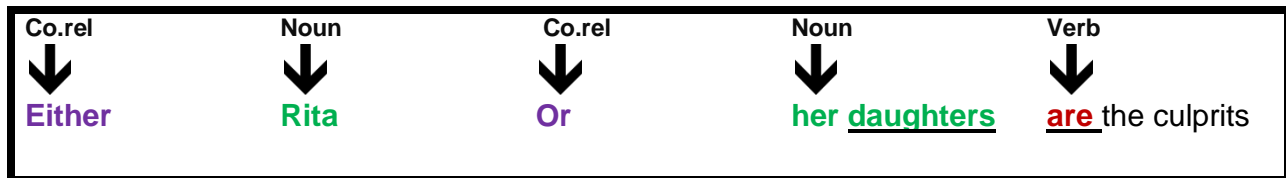
- Phrases like '**along with**', '**as well as**' and '**together with**' connect two nouns like the conjunction '**and**'.
- But the verbs in these cases will agree with the **first noun**.

Noun	Phrase	Noun	Verb
↓	↓	↓	↓
Rishab	along with	his brothers	works in Mumbai.



Either...or, Neither...nor

- When two nouns are connected by correlatives **either...or** and **neither...nor**, the verb agrees with the **noun** which is **closest** to it.



What are Finite and Non-Finite Verbs?

Read the following sentence.

Geeta **wants to present** her assignment.

- The verb highlighted in green in the sentence is **wants**; it is the main verb in the sentence.
- Its tense is the present tense.
- It has a subject **Geeta**.
- However, the highlighted phrase in red, **to present**, has no subject of its own.
- It is not the main verb of the sentence.

Verbs like **wants** are called **finite verbs** because they have a tense and a subject.

Verbs like **to present** are called **nonfinite verbs** because they have neither tense nor subject.

Examples of finite verbs:

They **drink** coffee in the morning. (Present tense)
 Mrs Gupta **left** for work. (Past tense)
 The planetary rover **will** land on Mars in 2015. (Future tense)

The highlighted verbs in the above examples have tenses.

Examples of infinite verbs:

Ruth loves **to jump** rope.
 The rolling pin is used **to roll** out dough.
 Please stop **shouting**!



The highlighted verbs in the above examples do not have tenses.

Verbals

What are Verbals?

- Verbals come under the category of **nonfinite verbs**.
- These are words formed out of verbs but function differently from them.
- They perform functions of other parts of speech.
- There are three main types of verbals in English.
 - Gerunds
 - Infinitives
 - Participles
 - ❖ Present participle
 - ❖ Past participle

Gerund

- A gerund is a verbal which ends in **-ing** and functions like a noun.
- It can play the role of a **subject**.

Worrying will not help.
Dieting is essential if you want to lose weight.

- It can also play the role of the **object**.

Don't give up **trying**.
She likes **writing** letters.
He practises **fencing**.

- Gerunds can be **single words**.

She kept **thinking**.
I love **swimming**.

- Or they can be **gerund phrases**.

Sarita loved living in Mumbai.
 (Gerund phrase)

Dancing to slow music was something they enjoyed.
 (Gerund phrase)




Infinitives

- Infinitives are verbals which are formed when the preposition **to** is added to simple present tense of verbs.

To write	To help	To find	To care	To love
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- Infinitives are used to express ideas such as **purpose**.

The shelf was used **to stack** the books.
 She joined her hands **to pray**.



- They can function like nouns as **replacements** for gerunds.

He learnt **to sing** and **to play the piano**.
 He learnt **singing** and **playing the piano**.



- They sometimes have objects.

The player crouched down **to throw** the ball.
 The milkman woke up early **to milk** the cow.

- Or be objects of verbs themselves.

I wanted to leave.

The performer had begun to dance.

- They can be complements to the objects.

He ordered a scrumptious meal to eat.

They waited for the flower to bloom.



- They can also complement adjectives.

This porridge is great to taste!

The convicts were willing to change.

- Sometimes, an infinitive does not take the preposition 'to'. Such infinitives are called **bare infinitives**.

Please help me open the door.

She let her children watch TV.

Split Infinitives

- When one or more markers come between the infinitive marker 'to' and the verb, split infinitives are formed.

It is important to quickly form a stable government.

(Split infinitive)

Please remember to not forget.

(Split infinitive)

Participles

- Participles are words which are formed from **verbs** but have the qualities of **adjectives**.
- Participles are of two types.
 - **Present participle:** Formed out of present tense verbs or '**-ing**' verbs.
 - **Past participle:** Formed out of past tense verbs ending in '**-ed**' or '**-en**'.

Noah saw a **flying** dove in the sky.

I need a **writing** pad.

- They can be used as complements for **subjects**.

He is a **relaxed** man.

Suhasini brought a **used** car.



- They can also be used as complements for **objects**.

We heard the cat **meowing**.

I saw the guests **leaving**.

