

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT: PRESENT TENSE

How to ensure your subjects and verbs 'match'

In the third person, remember "s" is for "singular":

- Put an **s** at the end of the verb when you use the third person singular in present tense (it sings**s**, she sings**s**, he sings**s**).
- Plural nouns may take an **s** but plural verbs do not (they sing, we sing).

canva.com



one bird sings.



two birds sing.

A singular subject must have a singular verb:

- The **cat**, like its wild ancestors, **is** (verb: to be) a skilled hunter.
- The **character faces** (verb: to face) heart-wrenching adversity in her childhood.
- The **bird sings** (verb: to sing) beautiful tunes.



Subject Verb
rthsliteracyprogram.weebly.com/

A plural subject must have a plural verb:

- Dolphins**, like whales, **are** (verb: to be) marine mammals.
- Dolphins**, like whales, **live** (verb: to live) in the ocean.

Two or more subjects joined by AND must have a plural verb:

- My aunt and uncle**, who live in Ottawa, **are** (verb: to be) both teachers.

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS:

These singular pronouns take a singular verb:

- everybody / everyone
 - anybody / anyone / anything
 - sombody / someone / something
 - every / each one
 - nobody / no one / none
- Every** student in that class **is** working hard.
 - Somebody** **offers** to clean up the classroom every day.
 - I tried on all **these hats** but **none** fits.

ALL and MANY take plural nouns:

- All** are welcome.
- Fifty students took the exam; **many** succeeded.

MOST can take either a singular or a plural verb:

- Some water is pure, but **most** is not.
- Many people try, and **most** succeed.



SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Continued

SOME PHRASES HAVE A PLURAL FORM BUT THEY TAKE A SINGULAR VERB:

Titles of works of art and names of countries that are plural:

- It
┌───┐
- *Great Expectations* is a novel by Charles Dickens.
 - *Cats* is a Broadway musical.
 - The United States is a wealthy nation.
 - The Netherlands has many canals.

Most nouns that are plural in form: economics, measles, statistics, the news, etc.:

- Physics is Juan's favorite subject.
- Measles is a common childhood disease.
- The news about the virus is not censored.

Collective nouns: a government, an audience, a committee, a family, etc.:

- The crowd at the Olympic Stadium was cheering loudly.
- The basketball team is going to Vancouver for the finals.
- The jury is going to reach a verdict before the end of the year.

Money, time, mass, and measurement:

- Twenty dollars is too much to pay to watch a movie online.
- Two hours is too long to wait for a cup of coffee.
- Twenty-five grams is more than enough butter for this recipe.
- Five kilometres is not too far to walk.

Subjects with OR or NOR can be singular or plural:

- The doctor or her secretary is expected shortly. (singular)
- Either the salespeople or the managers have made a mistake. (plural)
- Neither Asma nor her partner spends much money. (singular)
- Neither the doctors nor their secretaries are in the office. (plural)

For more help, contact the Academic Skills Centre (ASC).