

English Home Language, Grade 10-12, Rules of Concord

Subject-verb agreement

- The term ‘subject-verb agreement’, just like the name suggests, refers to the agreement between the [subject](#) and the [verb](#).
- This is mainly with reference to [singular](#) and [plural nouns](#)/pronouns that act as subjects.

General rule

- The general rule of subject-verb agreement according to Garner’s Modern English Usage is “to use a plural verb with a plural subject, a singular verb with a singular subject.
- This rule holds true for most cases.
- However, there are exceptions to this rule.

What Is Subject-Verb Agreement

The term ‘subject-verb agreement’ refers to the agreement between the [subject](#) and the [verb](#). This is mainly with reference to [singular](#) and [plural nouns](#)/pronouns that act as subjects. For example, in ‘She hates it’, there is concord between the singular form of the verb and the singular pronoun ‘she’.”

The general rule of subject-verb agreement is to use a plural verb with a plural subject, a singular verb with a singular subject. This rule holds true for most

cases. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Check out the next section to learn how verbs have to be conjugated in order to agree with the subject.

Furthermore, when used with other nouns and [noun phrases](#), the rule applies.

The same works even with simple past, [present continuous](#) and [past continuous tenses](#) when the 'be' [form of verbs](#) are used as the principal verb/[helping verb](#). Check out the following examples to understand.

- Santana is a singer.
- The girls are waiting for you.
- We were happy with the review of our first movie.
- Michael Jackson's songs are still enjoyed by millions.
- I was reading the latest book by Rudyard Kipling.

Rules of Concord: Exceptions

Rule 1

The first rule is what we have already discussed – the use of a singular verb with a singular subject and a plural verb with a plural subject. The subject can be a [noun](#), a [pronoun](#) or even a noun phrase. If it is a pronoun, the subject-verb agreement is done with reference to the [person of the pronoun](#).

For example:

- Rachel spends her free time listening to music. (Singular subject with singular verb)
- Blaine and Kurt play the piano. (Plural subject with plural verb)
- She likes to have a dessert after every meal. (Third person singular pronoun with singular subject)

Rule 2

When using the 'be' form of verbs, there is an exception. In this case, the verb is used according to the number and person of the subject. Check out the following table to see how it works with different pronouns.

Rule 3

The use of 'have' and 'has' in the [present perfect tense](#), the [present perfect continuous tense](#) and as a [main verb](#) is also dependent on the subject. All singular subjects use 'has' and all plural subjects use 'have'.

For example:

- I have a younger brother.
- You have taken the wrong cut.
- Swetha has a pet dog.
- William Shakespeare has written around 37 plays.
- Finn has been waiting to talk to you about the test results.

Rule 4

Compound subjects combined using the conjunction 'and' take a plural verb.

For example:

- Krish and Radha are on their way to the airport.
- Caren, Sheela and Akash have completed their assessments.

Rule 5

When more than one noun is joined by the [conjunction](#) 'or', the subject is considered to be singular and a singular verb is used.

For example:

- Celery or spring onion works fine.
- Your mom or dad has to be here in an hour.

Rule 6

Sentences with pronouns such as anybody, anyone, no one, somebody, someone, everybody, everyone, nothing and nobody are treated as singular subjects and will therefore use a singular verb.

For example:

- Nobody has understood anything.
- Everyone was happy with the outcome.
- Nothing fits me well.
- No one finds the movie interesting.

Rule 7

For sentences using 'either..or' and 'neither..nor', the verb should agree with the noun or pronoun that comes just before it.

For example:

- Neither Ricky nor Gina is here yet.
- Either the teacher or the students have to take an initiative to keep the classroom clean.
- Neither the children nor their parents are aware of the consequences.

Rule 8

When sentences have subjects like police, news, scissors, mathematics, etc. (nouns that are plural by default), the verb used should be plural.

For example:

- The news of demonetisation shocks the entire nation.

- The police have been looking for the culprits.

Rule 9

When a [negative sentence](#) is written, the 'do' verb is used and it has to match the subject.

For example:

- The children do not like working out trigonometry problems.
- My father does not work at the bank anymore.

Rule 10

[Interrogative sentences](#) also take the help of the 'do' verb. As far as the subject-verb agreement of interrogative sentences is concerned, the first verb ('be' verb or 'do' verb) has to be aligned with the subject of the sentence.

For example:

- Do you read thriller novels?
- Doesn't she know you already?
- Is Tina happy with the new house?
- Were you looking for me?
- Has Sharon submitted her final project yet?

Rule 11

When you have sentences that begin with 'here', 'there', 'this', 'that', 'those', 'these', etc., always remember that the subject follows the verb and therefore the verb has to be conjugated with reference to the subject.

For example:

- Here is your book.
- There lies your shirt.

- That was a great movie.
- There have been many changes in the timetable.

Rule 12

Abstract nouns and uncountable nouns are considered as singular subjects, so make sure you use a singular verb along with it.

For example:

- Honesty is the best policy.
- Love makes people do crazy things.
- Good friendship keeps your mind and body healthy.

Rule 13

When the subject refers to a period of time, distance or a sum of money, use a singular verb.

For example:

- 1267 kilometres is too long for us to travel in half a day.
- 10 years is not considered optimum to go on the water slide.
- Don't you think 1000 rupees is a little too much for a portrait?

Rule 14

The next rule is based on the use of collective nouns as subjects. Remember that when you have a collective noun as the subject of the sentence, the verb can be singular or plural based on the sentence and the context.

For example:

- My family is settled in Australia.
- All groups of participants have arrived.

Rule 15

In sentences that have adjectives such as 'all', 'a lot of', 'lots of' or 'some' are used along with nouns to form a phrase that acts as the subject of the sentence, the verb is used according to the noun just before it.

For example:

- All of my dresses have become tight.
- A lot of food is left out.
- Some of the books are torn and damaged.

Rule 16

When a sentence begins with 'each' or 'every' as the subject, it is considered singular and so the verb has to be singular too.

For example:

- Each student has been asked to provide a consent letter.
- Every teacher, parent and student is expected to work together.

Rule 17

When you are using a sentence to express a wish or a sentence expressing a request, verbs are used a little differently from other sentences.

For example:

- I wish I were a bird.
- If you were here, I would not be sad.
- We request that everyone make their choices now.

