



SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Singular subjects take singular verbs; plural subjects take plural verbs. Singular verbs usually end in *-s*, like plural nouns.

Examples:

Wrong: That girl work hard.

Right: That girl works hard.

Wrong: Two girls works hard.

Right: Two girls work hard.

Words Between the Subject and Verb

Make the verb agree with its subject and not with phrases between the subject and the verb. These phrases will usually start with words such as “at,” “in,” “of,” or “on.”

Examples:

Wrong: The tulips in the pot on the balcony needs watering.

Right: The tulips [in the pot on the balcony] need watering.
(The verb refers to “tulips,” not “pot” or “balcony.”)

Wrong: High levels of air pollution causes damage to the body.

Right: High levels [of air pollution] cause damage to the body.
(The verb refers to “levels,” not “pollution.”)

Wrong: A good set of golf clubs cost about \$800.

Right: A good set [of golf clubs] costs about \$800.
(The verb refers to “set,” not “clubs.”)

Singular Pronoun Uses

The following all take singular verbs:

- anyone
- everyone
- each
- neither
- every
- one
- everybody

Examples:

Wrong: Each of the boys are responsible for his equipment.

Right: Each [of the boys] is responsible for his equipment.
(The verb refers to “each,” not “boys.”)

Wrong: Every bird in the trees are singing.

Right: Every bird [in the trees] is singing. (The verb refers to “every,” not “trees.”)

Wrong: Neither set of wheels are rusted.

Right: Neither set [of wheels] is rusted. (The verb refers to “neither,” not “wheels.”)

Compound Subjects

Treat most compound subjects connected by “and” as plural. When subjects are joined by the word “or,” the verb agrees with the subject closest to it.

Examples:

Wrong: Either the president or the lawyers has called me.

Right: Either the president or the lawyers have called me.

Wrong: The cat and dog often fights.

Right: The cat and dog often fight.