

Subject-Verb Concord in English Grammar

To use any language effectively, it is important to be familiar with its grammatical rules and structures. The subject-verb concord is one the basic rules that we have in any language. When it comes to English Language, these are rules one needs to follow:

Rule 1

The verb and subject must agree in number (singular or plural)

This means that if the subject is singular, the verb should be singular and if the subject is plural, the verb should also be plural.

Examples:

1. He plays football. (SINGULAR)
2. They play football. (PLURAL)

The Basics

Basic Rule

A singular subject needs a singular verb;
a plural subject needs a plural verb.

Basic Pattern

	Singular	Plural
First person	I walk	we walk
Second person	you walk	you walk
Third person	he/she/it walks	they walk

Subject-Verb Agreement – Rule 1 [Source: vimeo]

Rule 2

The number of the subject (singular or plural) will not change due to words/phrases in between the subject and the verb.

Examples:

1. One of the glasses is empty. (Here, since the subject is 'one', the verb should be 'is').
2. The bouquet of red roses smells so sweet. (Here, since 'bouquet' is the subject and not 'roses', the verb should be 'smells' and not 'smell')

Rule 3

Subjects that are joined by 'and' in a sentence, use a plural verb. Subjects that are joined by 'either/or', 'neither/nor' use a singular verb.

Examples:

1. Radha and Meera are coming home.
2. Neither Akshay nor Rohit is coming home.
3. My dad or my mom is arriving today.

Rule 4

The verb in a sentence containing 'or', 'either/or', 'neither/nor' agrees with the noun or pronoun closest to it.

Examples:

1. Neither the shoes nor the bag matches the dress. (Here, 'bag' is closest to the verb, hence 'matches')
2. Neither the bag nor the shoes match the dress. (Here, 'shoes' is closest to the verb, hence 'match')

Rule 5

When the subject is followed by words such as 'as well as', 'along with', 'besides', 'not' etc. ignore them and use a singular verb if the subject is singular.

Examples:

1. Matt, as well as his dog, is expected shortly.
2. Pratik, along with his brother, is going to school.

Rule 6

In sentences that begin with ‘here’, ‘there’, the true subject usually follows the verb.

Examples:

1. Here are the chocolates.
2. There is a big puddle on the road.

Rule 7

In sentences that include sums of money, periods of time or distances etc. (as a unit), use singular verbs.

Examples:

1. 500 rupees is a high price to pay.
2. 62 years is the minimum age of retirement.
3. 10 kilometers is too far to walk.

Rule 8

In the case of words such as ‘a lot of’, ‘all’, ‘some’ etc. in a sentence, pay attention to the noun after ‘of’. If the noun after ‘of’ is singular then use a singular verb, if plural, use a plural verb.

Examples:

1. All of the cake is gone.

2. All of the cakes are gone.
3. A lot of the cake is gone.
4. A lot of the cakes are gone.
5. Some of the cake is gone.
6. Some of the cakes are gone.

Rule 9

In the case of collective nouns such as ‘group, ‘population’, ‘family’, in a sentence, the verb can be singular or plural depending on their use in the sentence.

Examples:

1. Most of my family is here OR are here.
2. Half of the population was against the bill OR were against the bill.

Rule 10

Nouns such as ‘mathematics’, ‘civics’, ‘news’ etc. while plural in form, are singular in meaning and use singular verbs.

Examples:

1. Mathematics is very difficult for some people.
2. The news is very saddening.

Rule 11

In sentences that express a wish, request or contrary to fact, the word ‘were’ is used instead of ‘was.

Examples:

1. I wish my sister were here.
2. Aditya requested that she raise her glass.

Solved Examples for You on Subject Verb Concord

Question: Choose the correct subject verb combinations in the sentences below.

- a. The lady in the car (look/looks) like your mother.
- b. Most of the milk (is/are) gone.
- c. One of the flowers (has/have) wilted.
- d. Either Ram or Shyam (is/are) coming today.
- e. Here (is/are) the newspaper.
- f. The group of dancers (is/are) here.
- g. Civics (is/are) my favorite subject.

Solution:

- a. The lady in the car looks like your mother.
- b. Most of the milk is gone.
- c. One of the flowers has wilted.
- d. Either Ram or Shyam is coming today.
- e. Here is the newspaper.
- f. The group of dancers is OR are here.
- g. Civics is my favorite subject.