

HAVING TROUBLE WITH SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT?

Remember the basic rule: singular subject = verb ending in s*
 plural subject = verb not ending in s

*When the subject of a sentence is you or I, use a verb that does not end in s. These pronouns are exceptions to the basic rule but are easy to recognize.

Although you may have to spend a bit more time, marking the prepositional phrases and underlining the subject in each sentence could help. By clearly identifying the subject, you can more easily match it with the correct verb.

Pronoun subjects ending in -one, -body, and -thing are always singular. These words are tricky because they imply more than one (for example, everyone), but the actual meaning is one at a time (for example, every single one).

The SAMMAN pronouns (*some, any, more, most, all, none*) can be singular **or** plural, depending on how they are used in the sentence. To decide if the SAMMAN pronouns are singular or plural, look at the word at the end of the prepositional phrase following the pronoun:

Most of the citizens plan to get involved. ("Citizens" is plural, so you should use a plural verb.)

Some of the debris has been hauled away. ("Debris" is singular, so you should use a singular verb.)

Consider the logic of subjects that are connected by and or or or nor. Subjects connected by and are almost always plural. Some exceptions to this rule would be things that are usually thought of as one, such as "spaghetti and meatballs" or "peanut butter and jelly." (For example: Spaghetti and meatballs is my favorite meal). Subjects connected by or or nor are not added together; therefore, the verb agrees only with the subject that is closer to the verb. (For example: Either the players or the coach is talking to the reporter.)

Read sentences very carefully if the subject is the name of a group (or a collective noun). Examples are words like chorus, audience, committee, or class. Subjects that are the names of groups are singular if all members of the group are doing the same thing at the same time; if members of the group are doing different things or at different times, then the subject is plural.

For example: 1. The jury reaches a verdict.

2. The jury go home after the trial.

In the first sentence, the members of the jury all agree on the same verdict at the same time (singular). In the second sentence, the members of the jury separate to go to different homes (plural).

Subjects that are units of measurement are usually singular because two pounds of sugar is just one amount, three hours is just one length of time, ten dollars is just one amount of money, and six miles is just one distance. Don't get confused and think that all numbers are affected by this rule. The only numbers affected are those numbers followed by a word that names a type of measurement such as weight, time, length, or currency.

And, finally, remember that even though an s on the end of a noun usually means it is plural, some subjects that end in s are singular: news, mumps, and economics, for example.