

Subject-Verb Agreement



You probably have little trouble figuring out how to make your verbs agree with your subjects when the subjects are clearly singular or plural, as in these examples.

SINGULAR SUBJECT: Marie plays the piano.

PLURAL SUBJECT: My friends play soccer.

However, it is not so easy when there are complications in the way the subject is presented as with these kinds of statements:

COMPLICATION

Use of *either...or* and *neither...nor*

RULE

Make the verb agree with the closer subject.

Ex. Neither my aunt nor my cousins are coming.

Use of *each*, *either*, *neither*, *anyone*, *anybody*, *everybody*, *everything*, *another*, *little*, *much*

Use a singular verb.

Ex. Neither wants to get up at 7:00am.

Nobody is here.

Use of such compound subjects as *Sam and Angie* or indefinite plural pronouns such as *several*, *few*, *many*, *most*, *others*, *both*

Use a plural verb.

Ex. Sam and Angie are going.

Several of us are angry.

The use of an appositive or parenthetical phrase, set off by commas and such words as *plus* or *as well as*

Make the verb agree with the main subject.

The appositive is something extra that does not affect the verb.

Ex. My nephew, plus two of his friends, is coming with us.

Practice. Circle the appropriate form of the verb in each sentence.

Example: Neither player (know, knows) how to pitch a curve ball.

1. One of the two teachers (is, are) eligible for promotion this year.
2. Spaghetti and pizza (is, are) his favorite foods.
3. The senior judge, as well as three junior judges, (is, are) to attend the seminar.
4. There (was, were) a flat tire on the bicycle.
5. Neither Max nor Clara (use, uses) ketchup on hamburgers or French fries.
6. The team, including the coach, (host, hosts) the pep rally each spring.
7. Violet, Mia, and Devon's team (play, plays) well under pressure.
8. My mother and father (enjoy, enjoys) my drama performances.
9. The chocolates in the fridge (taste, tastes) delicious.
10. The study on magnets (is, are) informative.
11. Neither of the couches (is, are) comfortable.
12. Mathematics (is, are) my favorite subject.
13. The news (is, are) on at 8:00pm.