

## Subject/Verb Agreement

Grammar is an essential part of writing. While a writer can express their claim or story without perfect grammar, following these writing rules takes the writing to the next step of being a professional paper.

### The Basics

In the English language, at the sentence-level, subjects and verbs are expected to “match.” This means that a singular subject (she, Joe, chair) needs a singular verb (is, goes, writes) while a plural subject (they, books) needs a plural verb (are, walk).

*Example: She writes in the library everyday.*

*“she” - singular subject; “writes” - singular verb*

If there are two or more singular subjects connected by “and,” then the verb is plural.

*Example: A car and a bike are my means of transportation.*

*“car” and “bike” - singular subject; “are” - plural verb*

If there are two singular subjects connected by “or,” “either,” “nor,” or “neither,” then the verb is singular.

*Example: My aunt or my uncle is in Utah.*

*“aunt” and “uncle” - singular subject; “is” - singular verb*

If there is one singular subject and one plural subject connected by “or,” “either,” “nor,” or “neither,” then the verb will agree with the subject that is closest.

*Example: Neither the books nor the backpack is here.*

*“backpack” - singular subject; “is” - singular subject*

*Neither the backpack or the books are here.*

*“books” - plural subject; “are” - plural subject*

If an interjection (a phrase that “interrupts” the sentence) is between the subject and the verb, the verb will match the subject.

*Example: The president, along with the newsmen, is coming.*

*“president” - singular subject; “is” - singular verb*

*The cars, as well as a bike, are stopped at the light.*

*“cars” - plural subject; “are” - plural verb*

## More Complex

If the singular subject is followed by an “of” phrase, then the verb is singular.

*Example: A group of students run every morning.*

*“group” - singular subject; “run” - singular verb*

If the singular subject is preceded by an “of” phrase with words that indicate portion (“a lot,” “some,” etc.), then the verb is singular.

*Example: A lot of the pie is gone.*

*“pie” - singular subject; “is” - singular verb*

If the plural subject is considered a unit (distance, periods of time, money, etc), then the verb is singular.

*Example: Five miles is a long walk.*

*“miles” - unit; “is” - singular verb*

*Ten dollars is a good salary.*

*“dollars” - unit; “is” - singular verb*

If the subject is a collective noun (“group,” “family,” “team,” etc.), then the verb is singular.

*Example: The team runs during practice.*

*“team” - collective noun; “runs” - singular verb*

If the sentence begins with “there is” or “there are,” the subject will follow the verb. If the subject is singular, then the verb is singular.

*Example: There is a book on the table.*

*“book” - singular subject; “is” - singular verb*

## Conclusion

To be certain that your writing has subject-verb agreement, read through it sentence by sentence and underline or circle the subject and the verb. This is a sure way to have singular subjects with singular verbs and plural subjects with plural verbs.