

Unit 9: Subject-Verb Agreement

Lesson 50

Making Subjects and Verbs Agree

If the subject of a sentence is singular, then the verb of the sentence must also be singular. If the subject is plural, then the verb must also be plural. When the subject and the verb are both singular or both plural, they are said to **agree in number**.

That **tree loses** its leaves early in the fall. (both singular)

Those **trees lose** their leaves late in the fall. (both plural)

The irregular verbs *be*, *do*, and *have* can be main verbs or helping verbs. In either case, they must agree with the subject.

Singular: **She is** painting a portrait. **He does** well. **It has** a good plot.

Plural: **They are** artists. The **students do** try. **They have** completed the lesson.

► **Exercise 1** Draw two lines under the verb in parentheses that best completes each sentence.

Astronomers (studies, study) the galaxies.

1. Our galaxy's name (is, are) the Milky Way.
2. The Milky Way (consists, consist) of the sun and other stars, the nine planets, gas, and dust.
3. The combined light from all the stars (spreads, spread) out to form a band of light across the sky.
4. In the night sky the Milky Way (resembles, resemble) spilled milk.
5. Throughout history there (has, have) been many legends about the Milky Way.
6. We now (knows, know) that Galileo, with his improved telescope, first confirmed that the light source was the stars.
7. This is not surprising because there (is, are) about 100 billion stars in our galaxy.
8. The Milky Way is flat like a disk, but it (bulges, bulge) at the center.
9. The spiral arms of the Milky Way (radiates, radiate) from this center.

10. Our solar system (exists, exist) 30,000 light years from the center, or two-thirds of the way out on an arm.
11. The stars (rotates, rotate) around the central bulge.
12. The sun (completes, complete) one orbit of the galaxy every 225 million years, which is one cosmic year.
13. While our galaxy has billions of stars, other larger galaxies (contains, contain) even more stars.
14. Two dozen galaxies (makes, make) up the "Local Group."
15. Amazingly, scientists (believes, believe) there are billions of other galaxies in the universe!

► **Exercise 2** Underline the subject of each sentence. Fill in each blank with the verb in parentheses that best completes the sentence.

A meteor looks like a star falling from the sky. (looks, look)

1. Meteors _____ often called shooting stars. (is, are)
2. A meteor _____ a streak of light that occurs when interplanetary particles vaporize. (is, are)
3. Many meteors occurring together _____ a meteor shower. (creates, create)
4. Comets' debris _____ most meteor showers. (produces, produce)
5. The particles then _____ Earth's atmosphere. (enters, enter)
6. A very large meteor _____ not completely vaporize. (does, do)
7. The particles _____ known as meteorites when they hit the Earth. (is, are)
8. Meteorites sometimes _____ meteorite craters when they hit the moon, Earth, or other planets. (forms, form)
9. Meteorites _____ classified by their composition. (is, are)
10. They _____ different combinations of minerals, such as iron and nickel. (contains, contain)

Lesson 51

Locating the Subject

The verb must agree with the subject even when the subject and verb are separated. Sometimes a prepositional phrase separates the subject and verb.

The **goal** of those charities **is** to provide shelter for homeless people. (The prepositional phrase *of those charities* separates the subject *goal* and the verb *is*.)

Sometimes the subject comes after the verb, as in sentences that begin with *here* or *there*.

Here **is** the **book** you looked for yesterday. (*Book* is the subject; *is* is the verb.)

In an interrogative sentence, a helping verb may come before the subject.

Does your **dog** really **eat** grapes? (*Dog* is the subject; *Does* is the helping verb; *eat* is the main verb.)

► **Exercise 1** Draw one line under the subject and two lines under the verb in each sentence.

Does he have your new phone number?

1. There are more cookies in the kitchen.
2. The night sky, in all its splendor, amazes us.
3. Here are the papers from the storeroom.
4. Has your mother called you?
5. The door with the broken lock has caused us much trouble.
6. There are eight boys in our class.
7. Here is the answer to your problem.
8. The grandmother of the Vasquez children drops them off at school.
9. The kittens on the windowsill watch the birds.
10. There is a bug in your hair.
11. Do the little girls know their address?
12. Here is my favorite picture in the museum.
13. Cars with air bags appear safer than those without them.

14. The boy with the red hair is buying his ticket first.
15. The director of both bands was leading the march.
16. Here is the best recipe for chocolate chip cookies.
17. People from all corners of the world come for the artist's exhibit.
18. Was Kelly happy with her final performance?
19. The teacher, with a nod of his head, indicates his approval.
20. The story about heroic animals was Arturo's favorite.

► Exercise 2 Draw two lines under the verb in parentheses that best completes each sentence.

The windows in the family room (was, were) very dirty.

1. The cheerleaders from the other team (does, do) a cheer for us before each game.
2. There (is, are) many boys trying out for the soccer team.
3. Sabine's years in Europe (appears, appear) to be happy ones.
4. They (waits, wait) in line for the choir tryouts.
5. (Does, Do) the boys have a snack after school?
6. Here (is, are) the ingredients for the salad.
7. There (is, are) nothing that Jane won't do for a laugh.
8. Our friends from youth group (visits, visit) us regularly.
9. The members of our team (wears, wear) blue and white uniforms.
10. The principal of the school (changes, change) the school's dress code every year.
11. Here (comes, come) the trumpet players.
12. The temperature in the cabins (rises, rise) rapidly.
13. On the table (sits, sit) the trophies we won.
14. Derek with his friends from school (climbs, climb) the tree in his backyard.
15. The chairs in the corner (is, are) antiques.
16. Here (is, are) the article that I told you about.
17. (Does, Do) this subject interest you?
18. The tables in the cafeteria (needs, need) wiping.

Lesson 52**Collective Nouns and Other Special Subjects**

A **collective noun** names a group. It has a singular meaning when it describes a group that acts as a unit. It has a plural meaning when it describes members of the group acting as individuals.

The **class reads** every day. The **class read** from their textbooks.

Some nouns that end in -s take a singular verb.

Mathematics is my best subject. **Mumps is** a childhood disease.

The **news is** good.

Some nouns that end in -s take a plural verb.

Here **are** the **binoculars**. **Are** my **clothes** ready? Where **are** the **pliers**?

The **scissors are** on the desk. These **jeans are** mine.

A title of a book or work of art is always singular.

Little Women is a book by Louisa May Alcott.

If an amount is treated as a single unit, it is singular. If it is treated as many individual units, it is plural.

Twenty dollars is the price of the radio I want.

Twenty dollars are scattered on the floor.

► **Exercise 1** Draw two lines under the verb in parentheses that best completes each sentence.

Her clothes (was, were) destroyed in the fire.

1. *Where the Red Fern Grows* (is, are) the book our teacher assigned us.
2. The news (is, are) the only program that my father watches.
3. Five dollars (was, were) lying on the ground, so I turned them in at the office.
4. The binoculars (helps, help) us see the stage from our balcony seats.
5. The group (talks, talk) about the issues that concern each of them.
6. Mathematics (was, were) my favorite subject until I took government.
7. *A Tale of Two Cities* (becomes, become) very exciting toward the end.
8. Your jeans (is, are) still in the dryer.

9. Three dollars (is, are) the price we charge for a car wash.
10. *Guys and Dolls* (starts, start) at eight o'clock this evening.
11. My clothes (gets, get) dirty when I wash the car.
12. *The Water Lilies* (is, are) a painting by the French impressionist Claude Monet.
13. Mumps (makes, make) the face swell up.
14. Millions of dollars (was, were) lost in the bank robbery.
15. The team (was, were) defeated last Saturday.
16. Fifty-five dollars (is, are) too much to pay for that dress.
17. Those scissors (cuts, cut) through anything.
18. After the meeting, the group (goes, go) their separate ways.
19. The class (takes, take) field trips every Friday.
20. Pliers (works, work) well in loosening bolts.
21. The team (accepts, accept) its award at the assembly today.
22. *The Grapes of Wrath* (was, were) written by John Steinbeck.
23. The good news (is, are) that I did well on my science test.
24. Four hours (seems, seem) like a long time to wait in line for tickets.
25. The scissors (is, are) too big for the little girl to hold.
26. The faculty (holds, hold) sessions with each of their students' parents.
27. Twenty minutes (lasts, last) forever when you're waiting for a phone call.
28. Your glasses (breaks, break) every time you sit on them.
29. Twelve days (is, are) a long time to wait for my birthday.
30. Evan's family (has, have) just moved into that house.

► **Writing Link** Write three sentences about clubs you can join at your school. Include collective nouns and other special subjects.

Lesson 53

Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects

An **indefinite pronoun** does not refer to a specific person, place, or thing. Many indefinite pronouns take a **singular verb**:

another, anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, much, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, somebody, someone, something

Everybody wants to sign the petition. (singular)

Some indefinite pronouns take a **plural verb**:

both few many others several

Many of the students arrive early. (plural)

Other indefinite pronouns may take a **singular or plural verb**, depending on what follows them:

all any most none some

All of the parents agree with Mr. Jackson's opinion. (plural)

Not all of the work is lost. (singular)

► **Exercise 1** Draw two lines under the verb in parentheses that best completes each sentence.

Several of his antique toys (was, were) very valuable.

- Another in my collection of books (arrives, arrive) today.
- Everybody in my class (wants, want) to win the candy sale prize.
- Both of the boys (attends, attend) science club regularly.
- (Is, Are) anybody going to the band concert?
- Everyone (chooses, choose) a different animal to imitate.
- Few (makes, make) apple pie like my aunt does.
- Everyone in that show (makes, make) me laugh.
- Everything in that store (is, are) made from chocolate.
- No one (makes, make) a noise in the library.
- Many of the ideas (was, were) good ones.

11. Nothing (is, are) as difficult as it seems.
12. One (is, are) never sure if Rhonda is being serious.
13. Few of the parents (was, were) as proud as my stepfather.
14. Somebody (helps, help) Dad make dinner every night.
15. Several of the songs (was, were) cut from the choir program.
16. Much (was, were) done to protect the endangered species.
17. Both of the scientists (has, have) made important discoveries.
18. Each of the vegetables (was, were) important for our diet.
19. Many (has, have) tried to change Randy's mind.
20. Everybody (volunteers, volunteer) to help the teacher pass out the papers.

► **Exercise 2** Fill in the blank with the verb in parentheses that best completes the sentence.

Few undertake the training schedule of a marathon runner. (undertakes, undertake)

1. Anything _____ an improvement on the current color of the room. (is, are)
2. Several of the artifacts _____ found among the ancient ruins. (was, were)
3. Few _____ the message of that movie. (understands, understand)
4. Someone _____ out the trash every Tuesday. (takes, take)
5. All of the soldiers _____ at attention when the flag is raised. (stands, stand)
6. Many of the books _____ the space program. (discusses, discuss)
7. No one _____ standing in line for tickets to that concert. (minds, mind)
8. Most of the table _____ covered with plates of food. (was, were)
9. Others _____ the bus, but Michael likes to walk. (takes, take)
10. Something _____ Anita when she sits by the window. (bothers, bother)
11. All of us _____ ready for summer vacation. (is, are)
12. When Tony eats spaghetti, none _____ on the plate. (remains, remain)
13. Either of the ties _____ well with this striped shirt. (goes, go)
14. Many _____, but few succeed in changing the dress code. (tries, try)

Lesson 54**Agreement with Compound Subjects**

A compound subject consists of two or more subjects that share the same verb.

Micah and Rosa cheered at the basketball game.

Two or more subjects joined by *and* or by *both . . . and* take a plural verb.

Skiing **and** ice skating **are** my favorite winter sports.

Both Liz and Jessica do well in math class.

However, if *and* joins words that refer to a single person or thing, the subject is singular and takes a singular verb.

A singer **and** songwriter from Missouri **is** here today.

When a compound subject is joined by *or*, *nor*, *either . . . or*, or *neither . . . nor*, the verb agrees with the subject closer to it.

Neither Bob nor his parents **are** at the barbecue.

► **Exercise 1** Draw two lines under the verb in parentheses that best completes each sentence.

Nachos and peanuts (is, are) his favorite snacks.

1. English and art (is, are) the subjects I like most.
2. Neither the coach nor the players (looks, look) forward to Friday's game.
3. Both Shari and Nigel (brings, bring) yogurt in their lunches.
4. Max or Jerod (does, do) the washing, and Sarah does the waxing.
5. Hamburgers, hot dogs, and french fries (is, are) on the menu.
6. Either magazines or newspapers (was, were) acceptable at the paper drive.
7. Both singers and dancers (performs, perform) in the parade.
8. Neither bowling nor tennis (interests, interest) Cody.
9. Mario's piano teacher and mentor (is, are) an outgoing person.
10. Two nickels or a dime (works, work) in that vending machine.
11. Either the blue blouse or the pink shirt (looks, look) good with those pants.
12. Sad songs or movies (makes, make) Yvonne cry.

13. Rock or country music (appeals, appeal) to Russ.
14. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts (earns, earn) badges for their efforts.
15. Blankets and sleeping bags (is, are) necessary for camping.
16. Both Melinda and Trey (works, work) in the cafeteria.
17. Neither drinks nor food (is, are) permitted in the library.
18. Girls or boys can (joins, join) the debate team.
19. Saturday, Sunday, and Monday (is, are) the days Paula helps at the retirement home.
20. Reading, drawing, and painting (amuses, amuse) Ethan in his free time.

► **Exercise 2** Write *A* in the blank if the subject and verb agree or *D* if they do not agree.

- A Both Mrs. Copeland and her students were at the museum.
1. Neither Tammy nor Seth look worried.
 2. Ordinarily Mitch or Rachel join me for lunch.
 3. Choir and band are activities that I enjoy.
 4. Maybe Janet or Sasha remember me.
 5. The ventriloquist and his puppet were the hit of the talent show.
 6. Neither my mom nor my dad was able to come to the show.
 7. Both Joel and Marty plans to go to the party.
 8. The boy and his puppy runs together every morning.
 9. Talking and chewing gum are forbidden in study hall.
 10. Daisies, roses, and a carnation was in the bouquet.
 11. Vicksburg and Gettysburg is Civil War battle sites.
 12. My favorite lunch is soup and a sandwich.
 13. Either a spoon or a fork is appropriate to use.
 14. The skater and her parents were waiting for her scores.
 15. Neither Jason nor Samantha like pizza.
 16. Doctors and nurses watch the sick boy closely.



Unit 9 Review

► **Exercise 1** Draw two lines under the verb in parentheses that best completes each sentence.

Here (is, are) the recipe for my triple chocolate brownies.

1. The Pep Club (cheers, cheer) at every football game.
2. Many of my friends (is, are) going to the bonfire tonight.
3. Dave or his brothers (plays, play) in every baseball game.
4. Lacrosse (is, are) a challenging sport.
5. The banks of the river (floods, flood) during the heavy rains.
6. Four dollars an hour (is, are) what the Bennetts pay their baby-sitters.
7. Each (has, have) his or her own way of doing things.
8. Most of Mark Twain's books (contains, contain) humor.
9. Few (appreciates, appreciate) his strange sense of fashion.
10. Mr. Harding (teaches, teach) English in a creative way.
11. The boss (wants, want) to hire a new staff for the project.
12. Mumps (is, are) a contagious disease.
13. Both of the students (scores, score) high on their tests.
14. Abbott and Costello (was, were) famous comedians.
15. The coach's wife (sits, sit) on the bench.
16. Both Joe DiMaggio and Ty Cobb (was, were) great baseball players.
17. Gisele's coach and teacher (is, are) Mrs. Monahan.
18. Neither music nor clowns (cheers, cheer) up the sad little boy.
19. The class (works, work) on the assignment as a group.
20. Everyone (wants, want) to go to the play-off game.

Cumulative Review: Units 1–9

► **Exercise 1** Draw one line under the complete subject and two lines under the complete predicate. Circle the sentence if it is a fragment.

The pig waddled across the pen and sat in the mud.

1. The maraca player kept Jake's attention.
2. We rode the bus.
3. The mayor, the governor, and the president attended the banquet.
4. The guest on the talk show recommended his new film.
5. The audience at the rock concert danced and sang along with the musicians.
6. Won't even last another day with that problem.
7. Isaac constantly reminded people how to spell his name.
8. Visited a college the other day.
9. We rode all the way to the top of the Eiffel Tower on our tour of France.
10. The elephants, the bears, and the large cats were my favorite attractions at the zoo.
11. The roller coaster threw Jon and Afi against the side of the car.
12. A large door to the cathedral.
13. The local cable company sponsored a charity event.
14. Our backpacking trip was cancelled because of bad weather.
15. My grandmother jogs five miles every day.
16. A trip to Canada was one of Jaelyn's dreams.
17. Never again in a million years!
18. Chika must pay taxes on her wages.

19. My uncle puts ketchup on everything he eats.

20. Nightcrawler worms make great bait.

► **Exercise 2** Fill in the blank with the form of the verb in parentheses that best completes the sentence.

Last night, my father _____ **drank** _____ three glasses of soda. (drink)

1. If we had _____ the game, we would have been state champions.
(win)
2. Who _____ that place to eat last weekend? (choose)
3. My mom _____ me the TV remote control when I was sick in bed.
(bring)
4. Because I _____ the grass, I missed the football game. (cut)
5. That performer once _____ in the school choir. (sing)
6. We were relieved when my aunt _____ home from the hospital.
(come)
7. If you had _____ the tickets right there, they would not be lost. (lay)
8. At the gourmet restaurant, my father has _____ calf brains! (eat)
9. According to legend, King Arthur _____ the Holy Grail. (seek)
10. I can't believe that you _____ to that concert a year ago! (go)
11. Li Cheng's family cheered when she _____ in the meet. (swim)
12. Nancy had _____ up all the balloons herself. (blow)
13. Tomorrow I _____ my sister the latest exercise videocassette. (buy)
14. My cousins had _____ their own vegetable garden. (grow)
15. Sandi _____ the door for heat before she opened it. (feel)
16. Max had _____ away from the stables when he realized he had left
the stable door open. (ride)
17. Because his credit was good, the bank _____ Haloke \$10,000. (lend)
18. The principal had _____ at many assemblies in the past. (speak)

19. My little brother giggled as the monkey _____ from the vine. (swing)
20. It's a good thing I _____ your advice and stayed home. (take)

► **Exercise 3** Draw one line under the subject in parentheses that best completes each sentence.

The (student, students) watch the movie silently.

1. (Gary, Gary and Camille) eats a hot-fudge sundae.
2. Before the show, the (performer, performers) practice lines.
3. When my (dog, dogs) eat, I also have a snack.
4. Hearing the lifeguard's whistle, the (swimmer, swimmers) exit the pool.
5. The lost (bill, bills) are in my coat pocket.
6. Why (don't, doesn't) the crowd leave?
7. (Those, That) is my reason for leaving.
8. (A field, Fields) of corn stretch for miles along the road.
9. The (sweater, sweaters) with the fancy buttons costs fifty dollars.
10. The art (gallery, galleries) downtown display the paintings made by my mother.
11. At the street festival, (Brad, Brad and Alma) buys some cotton candy.
12. The new (puppy, puppies) chew on anything they can reach.
13. (This map, These maps) show the way to the caves.
14. (She, They) watches the children next door every Saturday.
15. Zach's favorite (book, books) is a mystery.
16. When I have headaches, (Mother, Mother and Father) give me aspirin.
17. Right now, the (network, networks) are airing the State of the Union Address.
18. The (day, days) before the big game is filled with excitement and confusion.
19. The (soldier, soldiers) enters battle.
20. The (child, children) wear heavy coats in the winter.