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## Quick and Handy Grammar Review Subject: Verb Agreement

### 1. Singular and Plural Subjects

The basic rule for subject and verb agreement is that *singular subjects take singular verbs and plural subjects take plural verbs*. In general, you will only notice these differences in the **present tense**. This is because in the past tense there is no difference between the singular and plural form of the verb. The only exception to this rule is the verb *to be*, which has a different singular (was) and a plural (were) form in the past. Let's examine a few examples:

Bob (is / are) my brother's best friend.  
The new vice president (come / comes) from Indiana.

Should we use **is** or **are** in these sentences? **Bob** is singular, so we should use **is**. In the second sentence, there is only one new **vice president**, so we must use **comes**.

Nan and Barb (has / have) a special relationship.  
Sixteen teachers (works / work) at the new elementary school.

In these sentences, **Nan and Barb** make a *plural* subject, so we should use the verb **have**. **Sixteen teachers** are also a *plural* subject, so we choose **work** as the correct verb form.

### 2. Each and Every

**Each** and **every** are *always* followed by a singular verb. It doesn't matter if **each** and **every** are followed by one noun or a series of nouns; the singular verb is always used.

Every student **has** to take the Basic Skills Test in math.  
Every man, woman, and child **is** protected by the law.  
Each component **is** sold separately.  
Each item on sale now **costs** only \$5.

### 3. Some, a lot, most of, percentages, and fractions

Like **there**, the words **some**, **a lot**, **percentages**, and **fractions** are either singular or plural depending on the noun that follows. Let's examine these examples:

Some excellent wine is made in Chile.  
Some vegetables grow underground rather than above the ground.

In the first sentence, **some** describes the word *wine*, which is non-count singular, so we use the singular verb **is**. The word **some** in the second sentences describes *vegetables*, which is plural. For this reason, we use the plural verb **grow**.

1. A lot of the peaches in the basket **are** not ripe.
2. A lot of the tea sold in America **comes** from India.
3. Most of the managers at that company **work** on Saturdays.
4. Most of the water in the river near the factory **is** polluted.

### Quick and Handy Grammar Review Articles *Continued*:

To decide on what verb to use after **a lot** and **most of**, analyze the noun that follows. In the first sentence, the noun *peaches* is plural, so we use the plural verb **are**. *Tea* is singular (and non-count) in the second sentence, so the singular verb **comes** is used. In sentence number three, *managers* is plural, so we use **work**. In the last sentence, though, we choose the singular verb **is** because the noun *water* is non-count **singular**.

1. Sixty percent of the students in the class **speak** three languages.
2. Four-fifths of the spectators **are** cheering for the home team.
3. Forty percent of the work **was** done by only five employees.
4. One-half of the beer at the party **was** warm.

For percentages (i.e. 40%) and fractions (i.e. 4/5), analyze the noun that follows the verb. In sentences number one and two, the nouns *students* and *spectators* are plural, so the plural verbs **speak** and **are** cheering are used. However, the nouns in sentences three and four, *work* and *beer* are both non-count singular, so we use the singular verb **was** in both sentences.

#### 4. *Blocks of money, distance, and time*

Many times these blocks are considered **singular**.

*Fifty dollars* is a lot to pay for one dinner.  
*Five hundred miles* is probably too far to drive in one day.  
*Forty-five minutes* is a very long coffee break.

#### 5. *Special Nouns*

Some nouns are tricky. Study the following list and memorize the rule.

*Mathematics, statistics, economics, physics, aerobics*

Some academic subjects end in –s, but they are singular anyway.  
*Mathematics* **is** the most difficult subject for me. *Physics* **is** the easiest.

*Advice, news, and hair* [on your head] are non-count singular

Her *advice* **was** perfect for the situation.  
The *news* **is** always bad because of the war.  
Karl's *hair* is long and black.

*Police* is plural. An individual (singular) is a *police officer*

The *police* **are** coming right away.  
A *police officer* sometimes **works** nights and weekends.

#### 6. *Special Construction: One of the (plural noun) + singular verb.*

In this structure, remember to use a singular verb because the subject is *One*.

*One of the people* in the class **comes** from Vietnam.  
*One of the cars* in the garage **is** thirty years old.  
*One of Matilda's brothers* **is** a professional soccer player.

**Exercise 1:**

*Subject and verb agreement: Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.*

1. Most of the workers in that company ( comes , come ) from the Chicago area.
2. Shara ( has , have ) six brothers.
3. My brother and I ( spends , spend ) a lot of money.
4. The team ( is , are ) very good.
5. Two hours ( is , are ) the perfect length for a movie.
6. Mr. Izaguerra and his sister ( come , comes ) from Venezuela.
7. My mother’s advice ( is , are ) usually old-fashioned.
8. Six people ( lives , live ) in that small house.
9. Mathematics ( is , are ) very difficult for people with math phobia.
10. The police ( makes , make ) many arrests on Saturday nights.

**Exercise 2:**

*Subject and verb agreement: Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.*

1. Six miles ( is , are ) a long way to walk to school.
2. Louisa ( has , have ) two jobs.
3. Giovanni and Maria ( has , have ) a small apartment and three dogs.
4. The group ( is , are ) very large.
5. The jacket and the gloves ( is , are ) on the table.
6. Mr. Izaguerra ( arrive , arrives ) at work early every day.
7. The beer ( is , are ) very good.
8. Nine hundred dollars ( is , are ) a very high rent for that old building.
9. Mr. Iwasaki ( dance , dances ) very well.
10. Fifty percent of the book ( is , are ) about the Vice-President.

**Exercise 3:**

*Subject and verb agreement: Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.*

1. Every student in the class ( speak , speaks ) a different language.
2. One of my favorite meals ( is , are ) chicken and rice.
3. Three fourths of the flowers in the garden ( is , are ) roses.
4. A lot of the information in that article ( is , are ) wrong.
5. The police officer with the dark eyes ( is , are ) always in front of school.
6. Six blocks ( is , are ) too short to take a cab.
7. Marta ( has , have ) four brothers and three sisters.
8. The news on Channel 7 ( is , are ) always bad on the weekends.
9. One of the children ( is , are ) sick today.
10. Ms. Jackson’s advice ( is , are ) always good.

**Exercise 4:**

*Error Correction. Correct the mistakes in the following sentences.*

1. John work to much.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. My sister never have time talk to me.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Sixteen miles take twenty minutes on the highway.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. She never cry when she have an argument with she boyfriend.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. His sisters comes home very late at night.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. One of my friend are from India.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Her hair are long and blond.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. The cheese are from Vermont.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. My brother and my sister lives in big house.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Sixteen people in the class is from Asia.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 5:**

*Error Correction. Correct the mistakes in the following sentences.*

1. He always go church Sunday.

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2. In morning, Inez drink two cup coffee.

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3. The professors at this college is nice, but they gives too many homeworks.

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4. Physics are fascinating, but economics are too difficult for me.

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5. Professor Marrocco and her brother does not talk to each other.

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6. One of the my teacher are sick now.

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7. Every day are different and wonderful.

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8. The police is coming right now.

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9. The police is coming right now.

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10. In the hot summer, ten miles are too long to run.

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**Exercise 6:**

*Complete the following sentences. Insert a verb and any other words necessary to make a complete sentence. Make sure that the subject and verb are in agreement.*

1. Two hours \_\_\_\_\_

2. A firefighter \_\_\_\_\_

3. One of my best friends \_\_\_\_\_

4. Larissa and José \_\_\_\_\_

5. The counselor's advice \_\_\_\_\_

6. The news from northern Africa \_\_\_\_\_

7. Mathematics \_\_\_\_\_

8. Every student in the class \_\_\_\_\_

9. Sixty percent of the people in the country \_\_\_\_\_

10. One half of the wine \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 7:**

Complete the following sentences. Insert a verb and any other words necessary to make a complete sentence. Make sure that the subject and verb are in agreement.

1. Isabella's hair \_\_\_\_\_
2. A lot of students \_\_\_\_\_
3. Many lawyers \_\_\_\_\_
4. Forty-two professors \_\_\_\_\_
5. Two hundred dollars \_\_\_\_\_
6. All of the students \_\_\_\_\_
7. A lot of the words in Chapter 2 \_\_\_\_\_
8. Every person I know \_\_\_\_\_
9. Twenty-five percent of the book \_\_\_\_\_
10. A lot of the cheese in the refrigerator \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 8:**

Subject and verb agreement with quantity expressions. Circle the correct form of the verb "to be" in parentheses.

1. Almost all of the air near the factory ( is , are ) polluted.
2. Some of the Louisa's friends ( has , have ) cars.
3. Most of the teachers ( takes , take ) the bus to school.
4. Most of my brother's mail ( comes , come ) in the late afternoon.
5. Half of the boxes ( is , are ) full.
6. One third of the program ( is , are ) about the war.
7. Sixty percent of the books ( is , are ) in Spanish.
8. Many of the animals in the zoo ( is , are ) wild.
9. All of the windows ( is , are ) closed at night.
10. Some of the TV programs ( is , are ) very interesting.

**Exercise 9:**

*Subject and verb agreement with quantity expressions. Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.*

1. A lot of the words in Chapter 6 ( is , are ) new.
2. Some of the vocabulary in the lesson ( is , are ) difficult.
3. I saw one movie. Most of the movie ( takes , take ) place in China.
4. Most of the people I know ( comes , come ) from Europe.
5. Half of the book ( is , are ) about soccer.
6. Two thirds of the test ( is , are ) about Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.
7. Forty percent of the teams ( plays , play ) their games at night.
8. All of my money ( is , are ) in my purse.
9. One of my friends ( work , works ) at the mall.
10. Some of the newscasters on Channel 47 ( is , are ) vey young.

**Exercise 10:**

*Subject and verb agreement with quantity expressions. Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.*

1. A lot of the coaches in the tournament ( was , were ) from Asia.
2. Seventeen people ( was , were ) rescued from the water.
3. The police ( was , were ) called immediately after the accident.
4. Mathematics ( was , were ) my best subject in school.
5. Nan and Joe ( was , were ) married for six years.
6. The news from India ( was , were ) about the Cricket World Cup.
7. Some of the singers on the program ( was , were ) very nervous.
8. Every student in the class ( was , were ) on time for the examination.
9. One of my friends ( was , were ) hired for the job.
10. All of the cities in northern California ( was , were ) affected by the rain.