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Subject-Verb Agreement

NORTH CAROLINA OBJECTIVE: 6.02



Getting the Idea

Sentences have subjects and predicates. The **predicate** includes the verb of the sentence. The **subject** is the *who* or *what* of the sentence, and the **verb** tells what the subject is *doing*.

In the sentence "Shaquille went on vacation," the subject is *Shaquille*, the verb is *went*, and the predicate is *went on vacation*.

Subject-verb agreement means that the verb in a sentence must agree with the subject. If the subject is singular, the correct verb form is singular; if the subject is plural, the correct verb form is plural.

Singular: *Jonah likes pizza.*

Plural: *Jonah and Tom like pizza.*

The singular subject *Jonah* takes the singular verb *likes*. The plural subject *Jonah and Tom* takes the plural verb *like*.

If the subject is compound and includes separate elements joined by *and*, the correct verb form is plural. If the compound subject, also joined by *and*, acts as a unit, the subject takes a singular verb form.

My coat, scarf, and hat are on the table.

Beans and rice is my favorite food.

The words *nor* and *or* create compound subjects. Such sentences take the form of the subject closest to the verb.

Neither my jacket nor my boots are in the closet.

Either the games or the doll is in the toy box.

The subject of a sentence may be an **indefinite pronoun**, a pronoun that takes the place of a noun and refers to a nonspecific person or thing. The subject of an indefinite pronoun may be singular, plural, or either, depending on the noun to which it refers.

Each of the classrooms is spacious.

Many of the classrooms in the school are spacious.

Everybody likes pizza.

Nobody is going on the trip.

Below is a list of indefinite pronouns.

Indefinite Pronouns

Singular: another, anyone, anybody, anything, each, either, everyone, neither, no one, nobody, someone, somebody

Plural: both, few, many, several

Singular or plural: all, any, more, most, none, some

Sometimes it is difficult to tell what the verb form should be because the subject and verb are separated by a clause.

Correct: *The dress, covered in beads and sequins, was beautiful.*

Incorrect: *The dress, covered in beads and sequins, were beautiful.*

It is easy to make the mistake of writing this sentence so that the verb agrees with *beads and sequins* because these words are closest to the verb. This is not the subject of the sentence, however. The subject of the sentence is *the dress*, and the correct verb form is singular: *was*. Remember, the items listed within the commas, *beads and sequins*, don't affect *the dress*, which remains singular.

It may also be difficult to tell what the verb form should be when a sentence begins with the words *there* or *here*.

There is a dog in the back yard.

Here are your books.

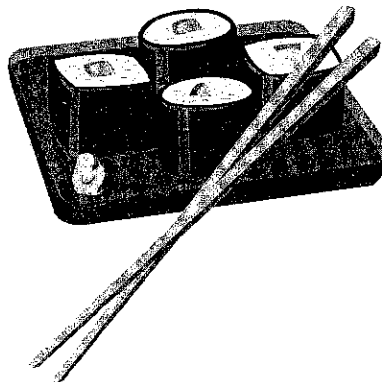
The subjects of the sentences are not *there* or *here*. The subject follows the verb. In the first example, the subject is *dog*, so the verb form is singular. In the second example, the subject is *books*, so the verb form is plural.

Coached Example

DIRECTIONS

Read this selection and answer the questions that follow.

(1) The morning commute is a hassle, and Carl gets to work 15 minutes late. (2) He has to rush around making copies for the 9:30 meeting, and finds there is no toner in the copier. (3) He doesn't have time to double-check his PowerPoint presentation, and at the meeting, the computer crashes three times. (4) After the second time, Carl becomes flustered and forget what he was saying. (5) In short, the meeting is a disaster. (6) The day is redeemed for Carl when he and Jamie eats lunch at the sushi place on the corner. (7) Carl loves sushi.



Thinking It Through...

1. What change should be made to correct sentence 4?

- A change *becomes* to *become*
- B change *second* to *seconds*
- C change *was* to *were*
- D change *forget* to *forgets*

HINT What is the subject of this sentence? Make sure that the verb agrees with the subject.

2. What change should be made to correct sentence 6?

- A change *eats* to *eat*
- B change *is* to *are*
- C change *redeemed* to *rediemed*
- D change *sushi* to *Sushi*

HINT Are there plural verbs in this sentence? Singular?

Lesson Practice

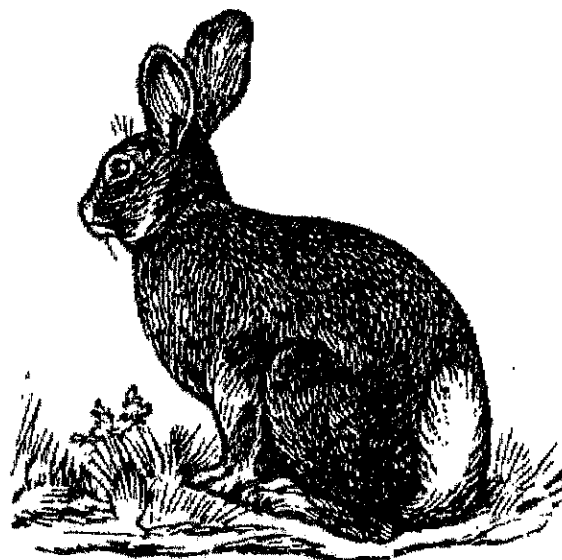


Coached Reading

DIRECTIONS

Read the selection below. While you are reading, think about the correct and incorrect use of verbs in the passage.

- (1) The rabbit hops across the freshly mowed field. (2) He stops and look around nervously. (3) What is that sound? (4) Where are it coming from? (5) His ears and eyes is alert as he sits still and waits.
- (6) He hops toward the center of the field, carefully looking about for the source of the noise. (7) Neither the trees nor the grass are silent in the breeze. (8) Birds are chirping all around. (9) A squirrel rustles leaves as it scamper down a tree. (10) The rabbit looks across the field, and seeing a cat, hop quickly across the grass to hide behind a tree. (11) The cat meanders through the grass, stopping to roll around before moving along.
- (12) Out come the rabbit again, looking warily in every direction. (13) The noise picks up, grows louder than before. (14) Fearful, the rabbit hops back to the woods at the edge of the field. (15) In the distance, a lawn mower buzz and shears away the tall green grass.



Reading Guide

Is there subject-verb agreement in this paragraph?

What is the rule for "neither/nor" verb forms?

What is the subject of the final sentence?

Independent Practice

Answer the questions below.

1. What change should be made to correct sentence 4?
 - A change *coming* to *comes*
 - B change *are* to *is*
 - C change *it* to *its*
 - D change *where* to *we're*

2. Which change should be made to correct sentence 5?
 - A change *is* to *are*
 - B change *waits* to *waiting*
 - C change *sits* to *sit*
 - D change *alert* to *alerted*

3. What change should be made to correct sentence 7?
 - A change *trees* to *tree*
 - B change *are* to *is*
 - C change *silent* to *silence*
 - D change *breeze* to *breize*

4. What change should be made to correct sentence 9?
 - A change *squirrel* to *squirrels*
 - B change *scamper* to *scampers*
 - C change *rustles* to *rustle*
 - D change *as* to *are*

5. What change should be made to correct sentence 12?

- A change *looking* to *looks*
- B change *come* to *comes*
- C change *warily* to *warible*
- D change *come* to *coming*

6. What change should be made to correct sentence 15?

- A change *shears* to *sheared*
- B change *distance* to *distanced*
- C change *buzz* to *buzzing*
- D change *buzz* to *buzzes*

7. What change should be made to correct sentence 10?

- A change *seeing* to *sees*
- B change *looks* to *look*
- C change *hop* to *hops*
- D change *hide* to *hides*

8. What change should be made to correct sentence 2?

- A change *stops* to *stopped*
- B change *look* to *looks*
- C change *stops* to *stopping*
- D change *look* to *looking*