

Subject-verb agreement with quantifiers

A (*large / small / great*) *number of* always modifies a plural noun. The resulting expression takes a plural verb.

A (**large**) **number of students** in my English class **were** absent on Friday.

When certain collective nouns, such as *majority* or *minority*, act as a whole unit or a single group, they take a singular verb.

All students can express their opinions, but **the majority** rules.

In the United States, **Spanish speakers** constitute a linguistic **minority** that **is** growing rapidly.

Majority and *minority* are followed by the plural form of *be* when the complement is a plural noun.

If you ask my father about young people today, he'll tell you that **the majority are slackers**.

Of people who are concerned with using language correctly, only **a small minority are linguists**.

- 1 Review the rules for quantifiers on page 85. Choose the correct form of the verb. If both forms are possible, choose both.

1. A minority of American English speakers understand / understands Australian slang.
2. A great number of my friends *has* / *have* sharp tongues.
3. My students can't write without spell check. The majority *isn't* / *aren't* great spellers.
4. In the parliament, the newly elected majority *is* / *are* ready to make some changes.
5. A number of hip-hop expressions *has* / *have* been added to dictionaries.
6. A majority of my friends *has* / *have* a way with words.
7. There are times when a minority *speak* / *speaks* louder than a majority.
8. A number of languages *is* / *are* spoken in India.

2 Complete these sentences with the singular or plural simple present form of the verb in parentheses.

1. Each person finds (find) the level of formality he or she is comfortable with.
2. No one _____ (know) the exact number of words in the English language.
3. Most of my friends _____ (speak) English fluently.
4. None of the linking verbs _____ (be) normally used in the passive voice.
5. A lot of people _____ (go) abroad to practice English.
6. A recent report indicated that about one-fourth of American high school students _____ (not graduate).
7. Plenty of my friends _____ (like) to send each other text messages.
8. Every language _____ (have) formal and less formal registers.
9. Every one of my in-laws _____ (talk) my ear off on the phone.
10. All fluent speakers _____ (need) to have an understanding of idiomatic language.