

Grammar for Writing

Subject-Verb Agreement

When writing, it is important that the verbs agree with the subjects. Notice the subject-verb agreement rules for the simple present.

Explanation	Examples
Use the base form of the verb for <i>I, you, or plural words or pronouns.</i>	I prepare you prepare we prepare they prepare my parents prepare
Use the -s form with third-person singular nouns or pronouns (<i>he, she, it</i>). The third person singular is formed by adding -s or -es to the end of the verb.	he prepares she prepares it prepares the cook prepares Bruno cooks
When writing, make sure the verb form matches the subject in number.	One boy reads . (singular) Two boys read . (plural)
Remember to match the verb to the subject, not to other words in the sentence. Tip: Prepositional phrases start with prepositions (<i>at, for, by, with, without, in, of</i>) and include an object of the preposition (another noun). This is not the subject.	X The main product of Brazil and Colombia are coffee. ✓ The main product of Brazil and Colombia is coffee. X The main products of Brazil is coffee and aluminum. ✓ The main products of Brazil are coffee and aluminum.
Tip: Collective nouns in North American English are often singular. Use the third person singular.	The United States makes many products. The team wins every game. The couple works in the city.
Tip: The noun after there is or there are is the subject of that sentence.	There is a dictionary on the table. There are three reasons for my decision.
Pronouns with every-, some-, or any- are always singular. Nouns with each or every are also singular.	Everyone has an accent of some kind. Every student needs a book and a workbook.
Spelling notes for the third person singular: When a verb ends in a consonant + y , change the y to -i and add -es . When a verb ends in -ch, -sh, -ss, -x, or -zz , add -es .	I try → he tries I watch → she watches I wash → he washes You miss → it misses They tax → the city taxes You buzz → it buzzes

ACTIVITY 4 Finding Subject-Verb Errors

Read the sentences. Find the 12 mistakes and correct them. If the sentence is correct, write C on the line.

1. _____ Everybody lives near the coast because the interior is too dry.
2. _____ A pair of scissors are necessary for this project.
3. _____ Laura carry her guitar from class to class every Thursday.
4. _____ The main method of transportation in all of those tropical islands are the public bus system.
5. _____ The trees behind my house is dense.
6. _____ Earth revolve around the Sun.
7. _____ A pilot and a co-pilot flies the plane.
8. _____ The baby elephants at the zoo weighs just under 300 pounds.
9. _____ The coffee cups in the sink is still dirty.
10. _____ Professor Jones teaches Latin at 9 A.M. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
11. _____ Most people in my town has a car.
12. _____ My family live near the ocean.
13. _____ There are many interesting things to do in San Francisco.
14. _____ Every term the students tries new activities.

ACTIVITY 5 Practicing Subject-Verb Agreement

Underline the correct verb form in each sentence.

1. One reason I want to visit Asia (is, are) to see Japan.
2. In my opinion, the best tourist destinations in Japan (is, are) Tokyo and Kyoto.
3. Tokyo (is, are) a very modern city with many tall buildings.
4. In fact, the skyscrapers in Tokyo (is, are) some of the tallest buildings in the world.
5. However, the city skyline with these incredibly tall buildings (do, does) not look like the scenery in Kyoto at all.
6. Life in Kyoto (move, moves) at a much slower pace.
7. Kyoto (is, are) not only smaller but also much older.
8. In fact, Kyoto (was, were) the capital of Japan a long time ago.
9. Many of the traditional buildings still (exist, exists) there, so tourists can see them all over.
10. Life in these two places (is, are) quite different, and tourists (visit, visits) each city for very different reasons.

ACTIVITY 6 Correcting Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

Read this student paragraph. It contains seven errors in subject-verb agreement. Underline each error and write the correct form above it.

Example Paragraph 13

The Hard Work of a Teacher

Some people **may** think that Mimi Robertson has an easy job, but she really do not. Mimi is a kindergarten teacher at King Elementary School. She teaches 22 **very** young children. Mimi's class of kindergarten students begin at 8:30 a.m., but she does a lot before then. Every day she arrive at work just after 7:30 a.m. Mimi has to organize her supplies and prepare the room for her students. If one of the parents is in class that day to help, then Mimi have to explain the lesson plan to the parent before class. After the students arrive at 8:30, the class begins. The young students in her class keeps her **extremely** busy for the rest of the day. They play games and learn new things. However, there is always a few small problems. Mimi's young students does not always listen to her, and sometimes they fight or cry. Every now and then, one child **shouts**, but Mimi tries to be very patient with all of her students. After school, she **must** attend meetings and create new lessons. Mimi says she loves her job, but it really is a **great deal** of work.

may: possibly, might

extremely: very, to a high degree

to shout: to speak in a very loud voice, yell, scream

must: to be necessary, have to

a great deal (of): a large amount, a lot
(*A lot* is used more in spoken English; *a great deal* sounds more formal and is more common in written English.)

Building Better Vocabulary

ACTIVITY 7 Word Associations

Circle the word or phrase that is most closely related to the word or phrase on the left. If necessary, use a dictionary to check the meaning of words you do not know.

	A	B
1. frightening	afraid	happy
2. to omit	to forget	to remember
3. interior	inside	outside
4. to revolve	to become	to turn
5. however	and	but
6. to shout	loud voice	soft voice
7. to share	to buy half	to give half
8. the purpose	goal	help
9. suddenly	perhaps	surprise
10. to create*	to make	to take
11. dense	a little in a big space	a lot in a small space
12. a skyscraper	a type of building	a type of weather
13. kindergarten	adults	children
14. suitable	bad idea	good idea
15. extremely	a little	a lot
16. a destination	a bus or a train	a city or a town

ACTIVITY 8 Using Collocations

Fill in each blank with the word on the left that most naturally completes the phrase on the right. If necessary, use a dictionary to check the meaning of words you do not know.

1. in / on depend _____
2. cloud / room a messy _____
3. at / for that book is not suitable _____ a child
4. list / storm make a _____ of (something)
5. and / but _____ so on
6. in / out cross _____ an error
7. in / on talking _____ the phone
8. a page number / a long report write down _____
9. deal / must a great _____ of (something)
10. expensive / price extremely _____