

Writing Center

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Subject/Verb Agreement

- The subject and verb must agree in number. A singular subject needs a singular verb; a plural subject needs a plural verb.
We {*subject*} are {*verb*} the best department in the company.
I {*subject*} am {*verb*} planning to attend the seminar this Friday.
- Ignore phrases and clauses that separate the subject from the verb.
The box {*subject, singular*} containing all the missing materials was {*verb, singular*} found in Fayetteville.
Program managers {*subject, plural*} along with the speaker, have {*verb, plural*} to meet at the seminar.
- When two or more subjects are joined by *and*, use a plural verb. When two or more singular subjects are joined by *or* or *nor*, use a singular verb. If the subjects are of different numbers, make the verb agree with the subject nearest the verb.
Sally and Joe {*subject, plural*} have been hired {*verb, plural*} to work in our Finance Department.
Either a brochure or a catalog {*subject, singular*} is {*verb, singular*} to be selected for the test.
- Use a singular verb after *each, everyone, everybody, nobody, someone, every, one, another, and much*.
Every computer in the terminal is down.
Everybody was present for that videotaping.
- Use a plural verb after *both, few, many, others, and several*.
Both books are out of print.
Many were asked, but few were able to answer.
- Collective nouns: If the group is acting as one unit, use a singular verb. If the members of the group are acting separately, use a plural verb.
The Board of Directors meets on Thursday.
The film is one of the best in the field.
The committee members are not in agreement on the decision.
The staff members have responded to the upward appraisals with enthusiasm.