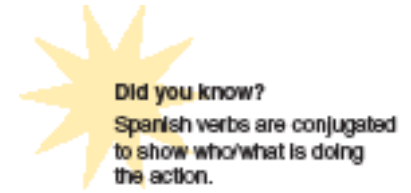


Subject-Verb Agreement

In English, subjects and verbs must agree with one another in number (singular or plural). Thus, if a subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if a subject is plural, its verb must also be plural. Here are some general rules for subject-verb agreement (and a review of singular/plural and count/non-count nouns):



1. **When the subject is third-person singular (he, she, it, the dog, my friend, love, coffee, etc.) the verb takes an -s ending:**

Sue works at CoHo three days a week.

2. **When the subject is I, you, they, a plural noun (books, toys, etc.), or two or more nouns joined by “and,” the verb takes no ending:**

We like to go to UCD volleyball games.

Textbooks are very expensive.

My sister and I talk on the phone every day.

3. **Some nouns end in -s but are actually singular. Examples include words like news, sports, physics, and economics:**

Economics is a very interesting subject.

Business seems to be a popular major.

The news on campus is we have found a new president.

4. **Uncountable nouns—nouns which don’t have a plural form—take a singular verb:**

Research has guided many of his conclusions.

Anecdotal evidence is not always appropriate

Homework gives us the practice we need to pass exams.

5. **If the subject is a gerund (going, swimming) or an infinitive (to be, to come) the verb must be singular:**

Being a student makes me crazy sometimes.

To copy someone else’s work is dishonest.

6. **If the sentence begins with “there,” the verb agrees with the true subject, which follows the verb:**

There are *ten students* in my math class.

There is only *one seat* left in UWP 21.

Subject-verb agreement errors are one of the most common types of errors. Here are some reasons why these errors occur:

1. **The subject and verb do not agree when other words come between them.**

Incorrect:

One of the students are coming to the party.

*My **lack** of friends make me feel lonely.*

*My **cousin** from Boston visit every year.*

Correct:

One [of the students] is coming to the party.

*My **lack** [of friends] makes me feel lonely.*

*My **cousin** from Boston visits every year.*

2. **The verb ending (-s) is left off when the subject is third-person singular or uncountable:**

Incorrect

He go to class early every morning.

Sugar taste sweeter than honey.

Correct

He goes to class early every morning.

Sugar tastes sweeter than honey.

3. An “-s” ending is put on the verb even though the subject is plural.

Incorrect

Some people enrolls in too many units.

Some of my friends is taking UWP 21.

Correct

Some people enroll in too many units.

Some of my friends are taking UWP 21.

ACTIVITY: RECOGNIZING VERB ERRORS

Each sentence below has a verb error. Underline the verb phrases and circle or highlight their subjects. Correct the errors and circle the type of verb error it is: verb form or subject-verb agreement.

1. Murray mentioned that the biggest enemy for writers are themselves.

verb form

subject-verb agreement

2. Research shown that the rate of international students applying to American universities is increasing.

verb form

subject-verb agreement

3. The student’s letter to the Harvard community focusing on the main issues and concerns of safety on campus.

verb form

subject-verb agreement

4. Some universities in the United States worries that the enrollment of international students will decrease.

verb form

subject-verb agreement

5. Different reports and news show many crimes are related with the anti-immigrant policies and attitudes.

verb form

subject-verb agreement

6. My instructor give me lots of feedback and tell me where I should add details.

verb form

subject-verb agreement

7. Many people commuting to campus rides their bikes.

verb form

subject-verb agreement

ACTIVITY: EDITING A STUDENT PARAGRAPH FOR SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Read the student sample below. Underline all verb phrases and their subjects. Correct any errors in subject-verb agreement.

There is a lot of concerns student have in college. Besides academic work, making friends are a challenge for new students. As a freshman, meeting new people help students to adapt faster to college life. However, different people has different ways to make friends. These four responses is about how to make friends in college. For example, Marian feel making friends are difficult because she lives off-campus. She plan to join the Kendo club in order to meet new people.