

[MUSIC PLAYING]

NARRATOR: Subject-verb agreement.

Subjects and verbs are the main building blocks for any sentence. A subject is the noun or pronoun that is performing the main action in the sentence. In the sentence Karla calls her mother every week, the subject is Karla.

Verbs are action words or words that describe a state of being, such as think or feel. The main verb in this sentence is calls. Karla calls her mother every week.

Because Karla is just one person, the subject is singular. The verb calls is also singular. Regular present tense verbs like call show they are singular by ending in s. Because the subject and verb are both singular, they agree and the sentence is correct.

Many students call their families regularly. In this sentence, the subject, students, is plural. Most nouns become plural simply by adding s.

The verb, call, is also plural. Plural verbs do not have an s ending. Because the subject and verb are both plural, they agree and the sentence is correct.

There is a problem with subject-verb agreement when the subject and verb do not agree in number. That is, if the subject is a singular noun, the verb must be singular and if the subject is a plural noun, the verb must be plural. In general, to agree, either the subject or the verb will end in s.

Usually, if both subject and verb end in s, they disagree. Similarly, if neither subject nor verb end in s, they disagree.

The price of gas increase every summer. This sentence is incorrect because the plural verb, increase, does not agree with the singular subject, price. Increases is the singular verb form, which now matches the singular subject, price.

Now let's look at a sentence with a plural subject. Gas prices increases every

summer. This sentence is incorrect. The plural subject, prices, does not agree with the singular verb, increases. Increase is the plural verb form, which now matches the plural subject, prices.

Looking for one s ending doesn't always make subjects and verbs agree, so let's cover the special cases and trouble spots. When the subject of a sentence is the singular pronoun he, she, or it, the verb should end with s, just as it does for singular nouns. He calls. She calls. It calls.

When the subject of the sentence is the pronoun I, you, we, or they, the verb should not take an s. I call. You call. We call. They call.

Even experienced writers who know the rules can make errors in subject-verb agreement. To avoid most problems, ask these questions. Does the subject have more than one noun or pronoun? Does the subject sound plural but have a singular meaning? Is the verb a form of be?

Are there words in between the subject and verb? Does the verb come before the subject?

A subject takes a plural verb if it is made up of more than one noun joined by and. Matt and Paula eat lunch together every day. The subject consists of two nouns joined with and, Matt and Paula, so it is plural and the plural verb, eat, agrees.

When the nouns and the subject are joined with or or nor, the verb must agree with the noun closest to the verb. In the sentence either my parents or Anna walks the dog on weekends, the two nouns in the subject, my parents and Anna, are joined with or. The singular noun, Anna, is closer to the verb walks, so the verb is singular with an s.

Even though some subjects may sound plural, they are singular so they should take singular verbs. A singular indefinite pronoun refers to general groups, people, and places. Each, everybody, anything, and someone are singular subjects that can easily be mistaken as plural.

Almost everyone in the United States knows "The Star-Spangled Banner." The subject everyone is a singular indefinite pronoun, so the singular verb, knows, agrees.

Collective nouns, such as family, group, audience, and team may sound plural, but their meaning is usually singular so they should take singular verbs. The team practices on Wednesdays. The subject, team, is singular, so the verb, practices, agrees with it.

The verb be is irregular and has unique forms for singular and plural nouns. Is is the singular form and are is the plural. David is happy. The students are happy.

Nouns follow this is/are pattern, but pronouns don't. Let's review the pronouns that follow the pattern. He, she, or it is happy. We are happy. They are happy.

The pronouns I and you, however, use special forms of be. The singular pronoun I uses the verb form am and the pronoun you uses the form are, even when it is singular. I am happy. You are happy.

Sometimes groups of words can come between the subject and verb, making it difficult to be sure that the subject and verb agree. A woman with seven cats lives in a small house at the end of the block. Even though there are several words in between, the subject is woman and the verb is lives. The singular subject and verb match.

Sometimes the verb comes before the subject in a sentence, but don't be fooled. The subject and verb still must agree. There are children in need of clothing at the shelter. In this sentence, the verb, are, comes before the subject, children. Both subject and verb are plural, so they agree. In this example, neither subject nor the verb end in s, so it's important to determine whether each word is singular or plural.

Remember, subjects and verbs are the main building blocks in all sentences. By using singular subjects with singular verbs and plural subjects with plural verbs, you will be a stronger writer.