

# The Agreement of Subjects & Verbs

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## Subject/Verb Agreement

In academic writing, it is important for every sentence to balance. Each subject needs a matching verb that agrees with it in number; therefore, a singular subject always needs a singular verb, and a plural subject always takes the action of a plural verb. Typically, people do not have problems when they use first or second person, but they often encounter this grammar error when using third person.

| Person | Singular        | Plural         |
|--------|-----------------|----------------|
| First  | I want          | We want        |
| Second | You want        | You (all) want |
| Third  | He/She/It wants | They want      |

### How it works

- Ex. He wants to attend the poetry reading.
- Ex. They want to attend the poetry reading.
- Ex. Math and science courses are hard for me.
- Ex. English or history is my favorite subject.
- Ex. An umbrella or galoshes are required today.
- Ex. Not only the students but also the faculty is against the new budget cuts.
- Ex. Neither this book or that book appeals to me.
- Ex. Few cars attract my attention.
- Ex. Others want to own Porsches, Audis, and corvettes.
- Ex. Most of the students are ready for the exam.
- Ex. Most of the pie is left over.

### Words that Require a Singular Subject and Verb

|         |           |           |          |            |
|---------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| Each    | Every     | Anybody   | Anyone   | Anything   |
| Either  | Neither   | Everybody | Everyone | Everything |
| Much    | One       | Somebody  | Someone  | Something  |
| Another | Many a/an | Nobody    | No one   | Nothing    |

### Words that Require a Plural Subject and Verb

|      |     |      |        |         |
|------|-----|------|--------|---------|
| Both | Few | Many | Others | Several |
|------|-----|------|--------|---------|

### Words that May Take a Singular or Plural Verb

|     |      |     |      |      |
|-----|------|-----|------|------|
| All | None | Any | Some | More |
|-----|------|-----|------|------|

Most

## Rules to Remember

1. And  
\* And always requires a plural verb.  
Ex. Poems and novels are my favorite things to read.
2. Or  
\* Use the subject closest to the verb to determine if you need a singular or plural verb.  
Ex. Books or poems interest me.
3. Neither/nor  
Either/or  
Not Only/But Also  
\* Like Or, use the subject closest to the verb to determine what form of the verb is needed.  
Ex. Not only the novels but also the poem is interesting.

## Collective Nouns

When using a singular word to describe a group, use a singular verb.

Ex. The Board of Directors votes on the issue today.