

FINDING AND FIXING SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT ERRORS

What's a Subject/Verb Agreement Error?

The subject of a sentence is the actor/idea of a sentence. The verb is the action or state of being of the subject. Subjects and verbs need to agree in number, which is known as singular or plural. A subject/verb agreement error occurs when the subject and verb of a sentence do not agree in number.

Singular Subject + Singular Verb = Agreement

Plural Subject + Plural Verb = Agreement

How Do I Find and Fix Subject/Verb Agreement Errors?

A subject/verb agreement error can occur in the following types of sentences.

Words separate the subject and verb

Error: One of my friends like to cook Italian food. (Agreement error: One = singular / like = plural)

Correction: One of my friends likes to cook Italian food.

The verb in the adjective clause doesn't match the noun it's referring to

Error: The people who lives next door asked me to get their mail. (Agreement error: People = plural / lives = singular)

Correction: The people who live next door asked me to get their mail.

The verb comes before the subject

Error: There is many reasons to disagree about politics. (Agreement error: Reasons = plural / is = singular)

Correction: There are many reasons to disagree about politics.

Error: Leading the club meeting today is Akiko and Jose. (Agreement error: Akiko and Jose = plural / is = singular)

Correction: Leading the club meeting today are Akiko and Jose.

The subject is a list of two or more nouns*

Error: Microsoft, Starbucks, and Boeing hires technical graduates from Edmonds Community College. (Agreement error: Microsoft, Starbucks, and Boeing = plural / hires = singular)

Correction: Microsoft, Starbucks, and Boeing hire technical graduates from Edmonds Community College.

***An Exception:** Items that are often linked together as a unit can either be singular or plural in number. For example, spaghetti and meatballs is plural if the two items are seen as separate items, but spaghetti and meatballs is singular if the two items are seen as one combined unit.

The subject is an abstract idea

(Examples: justice, patriotism, friendship, honor, number)

Error: The number of students in each class vary. (Agreement error: number = singular / vary = plural)

Correction: The number of students in each class varies.

The subject ends in an –s but is singular in meaning

(Examples: mathematics, physics, economics, ethics)

Error: Mathematics prepare students for many different careers. (Agreement error: Mathematics = singular / prepare = plural)

Correction: Mathematics prepares students for many different careers.

The subject is an indefinite pronoun

(Examples: anyone, everyone, each, everybody, nothing, everything)

Error: Everyone have to take a health class to earn an AA degree. (Agreement error: Everyone = singular / have = plural)

Correction: Everyone has to take a health class to earn an AA degree.

The subject is an uncountable noun

(Examples: rice, water, grass, money, snow, time)

Error: Time seem to go quickly during a test. (Agreement error: time = singular / seem = plural)

Correction: Time seems to go quickly during a test.

Subject agrees with the nearest noun in paired conjunctions

(Examples: either—or / neither—nor / not only—but also / not—but)

Error: Neither Sam nor his friends wants to miss graduation. (Agreement error: friends = plural / wants = singular)

Correction: Neither Sam nor his friends want to miss graduation.

Correction 2: Neither his friends nor Sam wants to miss graduation.

Sentence Practice

Please identify and correct all the subject/verb agreement errors.

1. Trang, Eric, and Carlos enjoys reading and writing essays in their English 101 class.
2. They also plans to take Math 97 next quarter.
3. There is many other classes they want to take together because they has formed a study group.
4. Everyone are welcome to join their study group if they wants to.
5. The students who joins the study group needs to meet every Friday.

For More Practice

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University has several resources—try them out!

- [Making Subjects and Verbs Agree](#)
(click the link above or go to owl.purdue.edu/owl, click on **General Writing**, then **Grammar**, then select **Subject/Verb Agreement**)
- [Subject/Verb Agreement Exercises](#)
(click the link above or go to owl.purdue.edu/owl_exercises, click on **Sentence Structure**, select **Subject-Verb Agreement**)