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## 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 = singular / lives = plural*)

**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 (For example: 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 (For example: 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 (For example: Anyone, Everyone, Each, Everybody, Nothing, Everything).**

**Error:** **Everyone have** to take a health class to earn an AA degree.

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

**The subject is an uncountable noun (For example: Rice, Water, Grass, Money, Snow, Time).**

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

**Correct:** **Time seems** to go quickly during a test.

**Subject agrees with the nearest noun in paired conjunctions (For Example: 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. (*Agreement Error: Sam = singular / want = plural*)

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

**Sentence Practice: Please identify and correct the following subject/verb agreement errors:**

1. Trang, Eric, and Carlos enjoys reading and writing essays in their English 100 class.
2. They also plans to take Math 90 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 and to test your knowledge, go to:**

- Capital Community College Guide to Grammar and Writing  
[http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/sv\\_agr.htm](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/sv_agr.htm)
- The Online Writing Lab at Purdue University  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/599/01/>