

Subject Verb Agreement

Indefinite Pronouns and
Compound Subjects

Indefinite Pronouns

- Certain pronouns do not refer to a definite person, place, thing, or idea and, therefore, are called *indefinite* pronouns.
- You should learn the number of all the indefinite pronouns so that you will not make an error in agreement when an indefinite pronoun is the subject of the sentence.

Indefinite Pronouns

- The following common pronouns are singular and take singular verbs:
 - each, either, neither, one, everyone, everybody, no one, nobody, anyone, anybody, someone, somebody.
 - If a word contains “body” or “one”, it is singular.

Indefinite Pronouns

- As the examples below indicate, pronouns like *each* and *one* are frequently followed by prepositional phrases. Remember that the verb agrees with the subject of the sentence, not a word in prepositional phrase
 - **One** of the chairs **looks** comfortable
 - **Either** of the answers **is** correct
 - **Everyone** with passports **was** accepted.
 - **Neither** of these **satisfies** me.
 - **Someone** in the stands **has been waving** at us.

Indefinite Pronouns

- The following common pronouns are plural and take plural verbs:
 - both, few, several, many.

Indefinite Pronouns

- The words *some, any, none, all, and most* may be either singular or plural.
 - This rule is an exception to the prepositional phrase rule because the number of the subjects *some, any, none, all, and most* is determined by a word in the prepositional phrase that follows the subject. If the word the subject refers to is singular, the subject is singular; if the word is plural, the subject is plural.

Indefinite Pronouns

Examples:



All of my fans **rush** home.



All of my work **is** finished.



Some of the birds **have** gone south.



Some of the glare **has** disappeared.

Indefinite Pronouns

■ Practice examples

- All of the flags (is, are) on display
- Each of the flags (has, have) a special design.
- Someone in this group (is, are) a jogger.
- Some of our artists (uses, use) strange materials.
- One of our modern painters (places, place) real buttons on the canvas where the buttons on clothes would be.
- Many of them (works, work) with sawdust, nails, and sand.
- One of Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings (shows, show) an animal's skull.

Compound Subjects

- Most compound subjects which are joined by *and* name more than one person or thing; therefore, they are plural and require a plural verb.

Compound Subjects

- Subjects joined by **and** are plural and take a plural verb.
 - **Antonia Brico and Sarah Cladwell** are famous conductors.
 - Last year a **library** and a **museum** were built in our town.

Compound Subjects

- If the items in a compound subject actually refer to only one person or are thought of as one thing, the verb is singular.
 - The **captain** and **quarterback** of the team **is** the speaker.
 - **Chicken** and **dumplings** **is** a favorite Southern dish.

Compound Subject

■ Practice

- March and April (is, are) windy months.
- My mother and the mechanic (is, are) discussing the bill.
- Virginia Wade and Tracy Austin (plays, play) today.
- Cake and ice cream (is, are) my favorite dessert.
- (Does, Do) Carla and Jean take dancing lessons?

Compound Subject

- When a singular subject and a plural subject are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the nearer subject.
 - Either Joan or her **friends are** mistaken.
 - Neither the players nor the **director was** on time to rehearsal.

Compound Subject

■ Practice

- Either the mayor or the city treasurer (is, are) scheduled to speak at the ceremony.
- Teresa and her sister (has, have) a valuable record collection.
- The Weinbergs or their cousin (owns, own) the new house on Elm Street.
- Neither John nor Herbert (has, have) the slightest interest in table manners.