

Master Verbal Ability

A Comprehensive Subject Course for GATE 2022

Basic English Grammar

Subject Verb Agreement



SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

According to subject-verb agreement rule, a singular subject (he, Ram, train etc) takes a singular verb (is, goes, shines), whereas a plural subject takes a plural verb.

Example: Ram goes to school. (Here the subject is a person whose name is Ram. It is a singular noun. Therefore, it will require a singular verb, i.e. goes)

They are coming here. (The pronoun "they" is considered plural. Therefore, it will require a plural verb, i.e. are)

Firstly, let be a little familiar with subject and verb:

Subject		Verb	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
He	I	Is	Are
She	We	Does	Do
It	You	Has	Have
Boy	Boys	Was	were
This/that	These/those	Has	have

Note: In common cases, the difference between verb and nouns:

Noun + s/es → Plural Noun (A countable noun become plural when s/es is added)

e.g. Boy (singular) → Boys (plural)

Verb + s/es → Singular Verb (In simple present tense, the verb becomes singular when s/es is added)

Example: Go (plural) → goes (singular)

Important Concepts for Subject Verb Agreement

Rule 1: When there are many (of's) in a sentence, noun before the 1st 'of' is the actual subject and the verb is kept according to that subject.

Example: The quality (singular noun) of students is (singular verb) good.

The cost (singular noun) of production of goods of all the countries is (singular verb) interesting.

Rule 2: If two subjects are joined by 'and' then we use plural verb.

E.g. Rahul and Somu are going to market.

However, if we use pronoun "each" with both the nouns joined by "and", the verb will be singular.

E.g. Each man and Each woman is committed to live a better life.

Rule 3:

(a) When two or more than two nouns or adjectives are joined by 'and', but only one person or idea is discussed then singular verb is used.

→ The + Noun + and + noun + Singular verb

Example: The producer, director, artist, writer and singer is (singular verb) coming.

(b) When two or more nouns are joined by 'and' but two different subjects or ideas are discussed then plural verb is used.

→ The + Noun + and + the + noun + Plural Verb

Example: The producer, the director, the writer and the singer are (plural verb) coming.

Rule 4: When the subject is joined by **but, in addition to, as well as, along with, together with, including, excluding, and not, accompanied by, with like, like, unlike, besides, except, rather than, nothing but,** then the verb will change according to the first subject.

Example: Sita (subject 1) **as well as** her sisters (subject2) is (singular verb) going to her shop. Ram (subject 1) **along with** his brothers (subject2) is (singular verb) coming today.

Rule 5: When two subjects are joined by "**either.....or, neither.....nor, not.....only, but.....also, nor, or, none- but,**" then the verb will change according to the nearest subject.

Example: Is either she (subject1) or her friends (subject2) going to her shop. (As subject1 is nearer to verb **Is**, hence will be according to the nearest subject)

Neither Gopal nor his friends have reached school today.

Note: When singular and plural both subjects come together the plural is always kept later.

Example: Either her sisters or she are going to enjoy the party. (It is incorrect because plural subject should come later in the sentence).

Either she or her sisters are going to enjoy the party. (Correct)

Rule 6: There are certain nouns which are plural in form but singular in meaning. Hence, they take singular verb.

- Physics, Mathematics, Politics, Economics, Billiards, Measles, Mumps, Rickets, Draughts, etc.

Example: Politics is my favourite subject. Economics is an interesting subject.

Note: If 'Politics' means political thoughts, 'Mathematics' means 'calculations, and

'statistics' means 'data', plural verb is used. My politics are not very good.

His mathematics are excellent.

Rule 7: Each, Every, Everyone, One, None, Any, Somebody, Nobody, Someone, Many a, etc. are singular. Hence, they will take singular verb, singular noun and singular pronoun.

Structure: One/ None/ Either/ Neither/ Each/ Every/ Everyone + Noun (Singular) + Verb (singular) + Possessive (Singular).

Example: Everyone has come.

Each student is reading his books.

More than one student was present that day.

Rule 8: If 'of' is used after **one, none, either, neither, each, every**, then the noun or pronoun that comes immediately after 'of' will be in plural form. However, the verb, noun, pronoun, adjective that comes in latter part of the sentence will be singular in form.

Structure: One/ None/ Either/ Neither/ Each/ Every/ Everyone + of + Noun (Plural) + Verb (singular) + Possessive (Singular).

E.g. Each of the students (noun plural) is reading his books.

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT PART 2

Rules for subject-verb agreement:

- A. A verb should not agree with the subject in its proximity but with the subject in number and person, i.e. the verb should be in accordance with the proper subject instead of the noun/pronoun near it.

Example: The quality of the fruits that you bought yesterday was not good.

(Here the noun for which the verb **was** is used is **the quality** and not **the fruits**.)

- B. When two singular nouns are joined by **and**, they take a plural verb with them.

Example: The boy and the girl were playing in the park near their home.

(Here the two nouns used, i.e. **the boy** and **the girl** are joined by **and** and take a plural verb

were after them.)

NOTE: After connecting two nouns with a connector **and**, if they suggest a single idea or refer to the same person or thing, then we use a singular verb after them.

Example: Bread and butter is the only thing that he eats for his breakfast.

(In the above sentence, after the two nouns **bread and butter**, a singular verb **is** is used.) My father and guardian is not at home.

(Here the words father and guardian are used for a single person; therefore, a singular verb-

is is used here.)

- C. We use a singular verb when we use words or phrases like **with, as well as, along with, together with, in addition to, besides, including**, etc. with a singular subject.

Example: He, along with his five friends, is going to the party next weekend.

(Here we have used singular verb-**is** for the subject-**he** that is joined by the phrase **alongwith**.)

- D. When we join two singular subjects with **or** or **nor** we use a singular verb after them.

Example: Neither his wallet nor his key is to be found anywhere.

(We have used singular verb-**is** after joining the two singular subjects with **nor**.)

NOTE: When one of the subjects joined by **or** or **nor** is plural, then we take a plural verb after it, and the plural subject must be placed nearest to that verb.

Example: Neither the coach nor the players are playing the match for free. (The plural subject-**players** is placed near the verb-**are**.)

- E. When two subjects are of different persons and are joined by **or** or **nor**, the verb agrees with the subject

near it.

Example: Neither you nor he has done anything wrong.

(The verb-**has** is used instead of have as the verb here agrees with the subject-**he**.)

- F. After phrases like **One of, Each of, Either of, Any of, Neither of, None of and Everyone of** plural noun/pronoun is used. Even if they take a plural noun/pronoun after them, we still use a singular verb after them.

Example: One of my teachers has received the award from the President.

(Here in the given sentence, after the phrase-**one of**, the noun-**teachers** used is in plural,

and the verb used in agreement with it is in singular.)

Example: Neither of the two girls is strong.

(Here in the given sentence, after the phrase-**neither of**, the noun-**two girls** used is plural,

and the verb-**is** used after them is singular.)

- G. If two nouns preceded by words such as **each** and **every** are joined by **and**, they take singular verb after them.

Example: Every girl and every boy was presented with a trophy and a medal. (Here we have used a singular verb-**was**.)

- H. Nouns such as news, mathematics, ethics, economics, shingles, mumps, rickets, billiards, darts etc. are singular in meaning but are plural in form and take a singular verb with them.

Example: Mumps is a viral infection that affects saliva producing glands. (Here a singular verb-**is** is used with the noun-**mumps**.)

Billiards is a game that is popular not just in England but around the world.

(Here a singular verb-**is** is used with the noun-**billiards**.)

NOTE: Words such as mathematics, economics when used as principles, a system or a field of study, take plural verb with them.

Example: Organic farmers are in business, so the **economics** are not ignored, but all these other issues are also considered important.

(Here the noun-**economics** means the condition of a region or a group, and thus it takes a plural verb-**are** after it.)

- I. Some nouns which look singular but are plural in meaning take plural verb with them. Few examples of such words are: Police, gentry, clergy, people, children, cattle, infantry, etc. **Example:** Police **were** patrolling near my house last night.

At least 10 people **were** killed in the car crash.

- J. Collective nouns take both singular and plural verb with them. They take the verb according to the context of the sentence.

Let's see how we can use them in both ways.

Example: With a singular verb

The audience was advised by the authorities to maintain silence.

(Here the noun-**audience** will take singular verb-**was** with it as the audience here is taken as a single entity.)

Example: With a plural verb

The jury were divided in their opinion of giving the culprit a death sentence.

(Here the noun-**jury** is referred to individual members of the jury; therefore, we will use a plural verb-**were**.)

SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT PART 3

A.

- If we use the phrase **more than one** with a plural noun, we must place the plural noun near the word **more** and only plural verb must be used.

Example: More boys than one were killed in the accident.

- If we use the phrase **more than one** with a singular noun, we must place the singular noun near the word **one** and only singular verb must be used.

Example: More than one book has been torn by my younger sibling.

B.

- After phrases like **a number of, a great number of, a large number of, a variety of**, we use a plural noun and a plural verb.

Example: A large number of families in our country are below the poverty line.

- After phrases like **the number of, the great number of, the large number of, the variety of**, we use a plural noun but a singular verb.

Example: The number of dogs in my locality is increasing rapidly.

- C. If the nouns used before and after a preposition are same and singular, we take a singular verb after them.

Example: Book after book was read by him during his holidays.

- D. When we add an article **the** before the adjectives such as poor, rich, old, young, etc. we change them into plural nouns.

Example: The rich are generous towards the poor.

E.

- The noun used after a phrase **many a/many an** is always countable and singular. Also, it takes a singular verb after it.

Example: Many a student has performed on this stage.

- The noun used after a phrase **many/ a good many/ a great many/ many of/ a good many of/ a great many of** is always countable and plural. Also, it takes a plural verb after it.

Example: Many of the hooligans were arrested by the police.

F.

- When cardinal adjectives such as **one, two, three, four, five**, etc. are used with a plural noun to depict a certain amount, weight, height, distance and period considered as a whole, then we use a singular verb with it.

Example: Two kilometers is not a long distance for the people who run

marathons.

- When cardinal adjectives are used to depict different things, then we use a plural verb.

Example: Seven lakhs are to be distributed among the employees as the Diwali bonus.

G. In optative sentences, we use only a plural verb with both singular and plural subjects.

Example: God save the king!

H. There are words such as **scissors, shambles, tongs, archives, wages, spectacles, pants, trousers, bellows, alms etc.** which are used only in plural form and take plural verbs with them.

Example: Do you have scissors? Where are my spectacles?

I. With uncountable nouns, we use only singular verbs. Examples of uncountable nouns: **information, furniture, advice, scenery, painting, knowledge, luggage, postage, etc.**

Example: All I gave him was a piece of information.

J. In hypothetical/ imaginary situations marked by the use of phrases like **if, as if, I wish, as though, suppose, in case** we use the verb **were**.

Example: If I were the president, I would change the system.
