

Usage - Subject-Verb Agreement

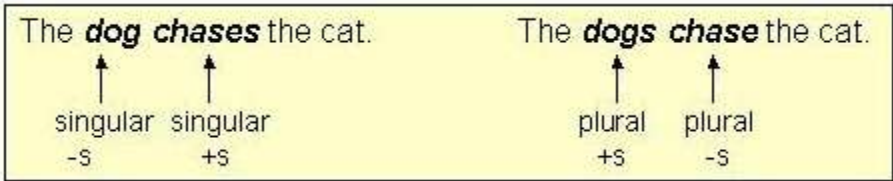
Subjects and **verbs** must AGREE with one another in **number** (singular or plural). Thus, if a subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if a subject is plural, its verb must also be plural.

In present tenses, nouns and verbs form plurals in opposite ways:

nouns ADD an **s** to the singular form,

BUT

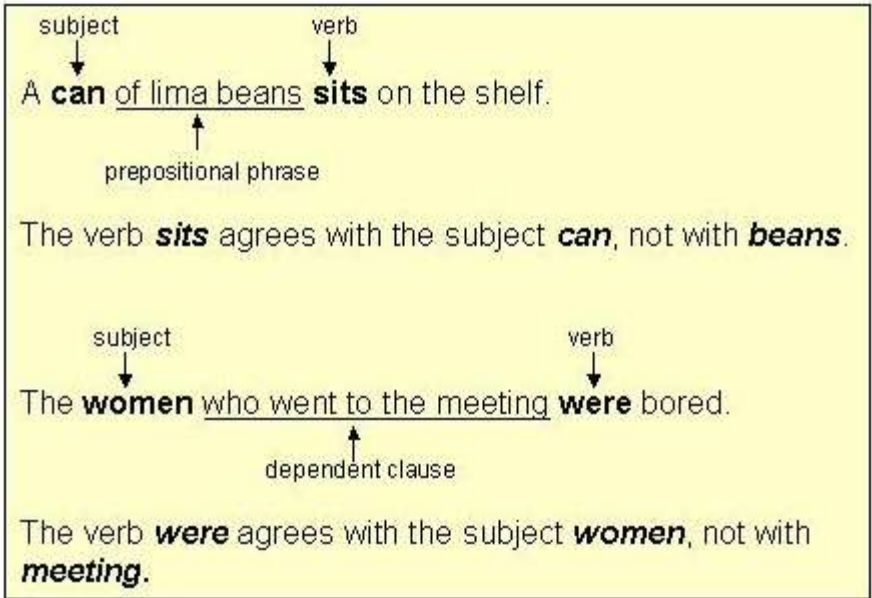
verbs REMOVE an **s** from the singular form.



Here are nine subject-verb agreement rules.

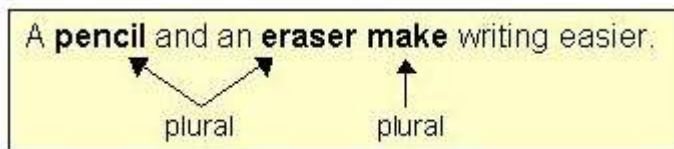
1. A **phrase** or **clause** between subject and verb does not change the number of the subject.

Examples:

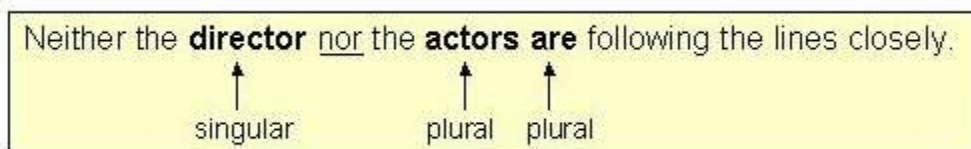


2. **Indefinite pronouns** as subjects

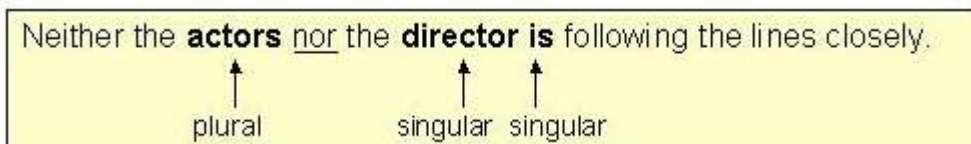
3. Compound subjects joined by *and* are always plural.



4. With **compound subjects** joined by *or/nor*, the verb agrees with the subject nearer to it.

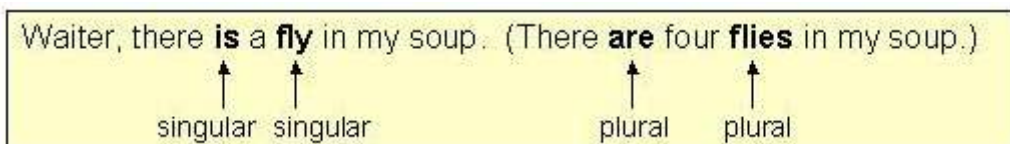


In the above example, the plural verb **are** agrees with the nearer subject **actors**.



In this example, the singular verb **is** agrees with the nearer subject **director**.

5. **Inverted Subjects** must agree with the verb.



How **are** the **relatives** taking the bad news?
↑ plural ↑ plural

6. Collective Nouns (*group, jury, crowd, team, etc.*) may be singular or plural, depending on meaning.

The **jury has** awarded custody to the grandmother.
↑ singular ↘ singular

In this example, the jury is acting as one unit; therefore, the verb is singular.

The **jury members have** been arguing for five days.
↑ plural ↑ plural

In this example, the jury members are acting as twelve individuals; therefore, the verb is plural.

7. Titles of single entities (*books, organizations, countries, etc.*) are always **singular**.

The Grapes of Wrath **takes** a long time to read.
↑ singular ↑ singular

8. Plural form subjects

- **Plural form subjects with a singular meaning** take a singular verb. (e.g. *news, measles, mumps, physics, etc.*)

11-A. With **the number of** _____, use a singular verb.

The number of volunteers **grows** each year.
↑
singular verb

11-B. With **a number of** _____, use a plural verb.

A number of people **grow** tomatoes each summer.
↑
plural verb

12. With **every** _____ and **many a** _____, use a singular verb.

Every man, woman, and child **participates** in the lifeboat drill,
↑
singular verb

Many a child **dreams** about becoming famous one day.
↑
singular verb