

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT LESSON 1

SUBJECT: The noun or pronoun that indicates what the sentence is about

VERB: The action of the noun or pronoun

REMEMBER: Subject/verb agreement is commonly tested by using: *is/are, was/were, and has/have*. If these words are underlined, check for subject/verb agreement.

AGREEMENT: All subjects and verbs must agree in number.

WHEN YOU SEE a verb underlined, you must ask yourself:

"Who (or what) is doing the verb, and do both subject and verb agree in number?"

SINGULAR	PLURAL
The <u>girl</u> jumps.	The <u>girls</u> jump.
<u>He</u> is happy.	<u>They</u> are happy.

LESSON 1.1

PREPOSITION: Any word (*in, at, of, for, to, over, among, between, under...*) that indicates a relationship between a noun and another part of the sentence

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE: Any phrase (*in the house, at the mall, to the store, for a jog, under the table...*) that begins with a preposition and ends before the verb



Eliminate all **PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES**. The subject will never be in a prepositional phrase. Prepositional phrases contain extra details that often mislead the reader. **CROSSING THEM OUT** makes it easier to identify the subject.

EXAMPLE

The cars *in the lot* are clean.

The cars ~~in the lot~~ are clean. → Cross out "in the lot"

The cars are clean. ✓

One *of the girls* is visiting.

One ~~of the girls~~ is visiting. → Cross out "of the girls"

One is visiting. ✓

LESSON 1.2

INTERRUPTER: Any detail positioned between two commas



Eliminate all **INTERRUPTERS**. The subject will never be in an interrupter. Interrupters contain extra details that often mislead the reader. **CROSSING THEM OUT** makes it easier to identify the subject.

EXAMPLE

Patrick, *in addition to Tom and Mark*, is coming to the reception.

Patrick, ~~in addition to Tom and Mark~~, is coming to the reception. → Cross out "in addition to Tom and Mark,"

Patrick is coming to the reception. ✓

LESSON 1.3 TRICKY SINGULAR: A singular word that sounds plural or is commonly misused as a plural

Look out for **TRICKY SINGULARS** (**neither, either, everyone, everybody, someone, somebody, anybody, anything, each, anyone, no one, everything, little, and much**).

EXAMPLE

Neither of the twins is sick.

Neither of the twins is sick. → Cross out "of the twins"

Neither is sick. ✓

Either of the rooms at the hotel is available.

Either of the rooms at the hotel is available. → Cross out "of the rooms at the hotel"

Either is available. ✓

LESSON 1.4 TRICKY PLURAL: A plural word that sounds singular or is commonly misused as a singular

Look out for **TRICKY PLURALS** (**Plural/Singular: data/datum, phenomena/phenomenon, media/medium, and criteria/criterion**).

EXAMPLE

The *data* from the computer *are* on my disc.

The *data from the computer are* on my disc. → Cross out "from the computer"

The *data are* on my disc. ✓

The *criteria* for the assigned essay *are* very complex.

The *criteria for the assigned essay are* very complex. → Cross out "for the assigned essay"

The *criteria are* very complex. ✓

LESSON 1.5

NEITHER/NOR AND EITHER/OR: Two subjects separated by a standard phrase



Look out for **NEITHER/NOR** and **EITHER/OR** phrases. Although **NEITHER** and **EITHER** are singular, when grouped with **NOR/OR**, the word that ends the phrase determines the verb.

FORMULA:

Either A or B → B determines the verb

Neither A nor B → B determines the verb

EXAMPLEEither John or *Mary* is right. ✓Neither John nor *the Parkers* are wrong. ✓

Sometimes the "B Phrase" includes a prepositional phrase. Apply the technique:

Either the Smiths or *one of the Johnsons* was expected to bring the salad.Either the Smiths or *one of the Johnsons* was expected to bring the salad. → Cross out "of the Johnsons"Either the Smiths or *one* was expected to bring the salad. ✓

LESSON 1.6

INVERTED SENTENCE: The verb comes before the subject in a sentence



Look out for anything **INVERTED (VERB/SUBJECT)**. Sentences that start with the word "there" and compound sentences that have more than one subject/verb combination tend to be inverted.

HOW TO CHECK THE VERB:

Simply un-invert (flip) the subject and verb.

EXAMPLEThere is a cat in the house.

FLIPPED: cat is ✓

During the day, there is ten cats in the garage.FLIPPED: ten cats is ✗
ten cats are ✓

When subject nouns are LINKED with an "AND," the subject is PLURAL.

- ✓ The house **and** the car were ruined by the storm.
- ✓ John **and** Mary eat chocolate all day.
- ✓ The dog **and** the cat are in trouble for eating the cake on the counter.