



# Correcting Subject-Verb Agreement

When writing a paper, it is helpful to keep in mind that verbs must always agree with the subject in both number (singular or plural) and person (first, second, or third).

This type of agreement helps to ensure that your paper will be accurate, clear, and stylistically correct.

## Problem

**There are words between the subject and the verb.**

It can be difficult to locate the subject if there are several words or phrases between it and the verb. In these cases, it is best to ignore the surrounding words.

## Example

- Almost **all** of the tutors who work in the Writing Center during the year are English majors.

In this sentence, “all” is the subject noun and “are” is the verb.

## Problem

**There is a two-part subject.**

Two-part subjects joined by the word “and” are almost always plural.

Some two-part subjects are joined by “either . . . or,” “neither . . . nor,” “not only . . . but also.” In these cases, the verb should agree with the subject closest to the verb.

## Example

- **Brainstorming and drafting** are essential parts of the writing process.

In this sentence, “Brainstorming and drafting” is a plural subject and requires the plural verb “are.”

- Neither your peers nor your **teacher** has the final say about your paper.

In this case, the verb must agree with “teacher” because it's closest to the verb “has.”

## Problem

**You have an indefinite as a subject.**

When indefinite words with singular meanings—such as each, every, and any—are the subject noun, or when they come before the subject noun, they take a singular verb.

- **Each** of the players has a chance to win.

In this case, the verb is singular because the subject of the sentence is “each.”

- **Each student** has his/her own method of writing.

In this case, the verb is singular because the subject noun, student, is preceded by “each.”

## Tips

The **Subject** is the who/what performing the action in the sentence, and the **Verb** is the action in the sentence.

Generally, if the subject ends with an “s,” then the verb doesn't have an “s;” if the subject does not end with an “s,” then the verb will end in an “s.” Give it a try.

## Practice

Choose the subject (or two part subject) and circle the verb that agrees with it.

1. Neither the professor nor the students (was/were) able to comprehend the scheduling process.
2. Dr. Rafoth, together with many other professors at this university, (support/supports) peer conferencing.
3. You and your roommate often (study/studies) together.
4. Everyone involved in the project (contribute/contributes) the same amount of effort.

*The information on this page was written by Nicki Flora*