

Subject-Verb Agreement

Always simplify sentences in order to identify the subject. Once the subject has been determined, check for proper subject-verb agreement. Match singular subjects with singular verb forms and plural subjects with plural verb forms.

Simplify sentences by stripping out

- a. **Prepositional phrases** (The birds *on the box* were pretty.)
- b. **Interrupting phrases/clauses** (Eve, *the youngest*, was the tallest in the class.)
- c. **Opening & closing phrases/clauses** (*Early each day*, the birds begin to sing.)

* HINT: The subject will never be found in these portions of the sentence.

For Example:

Strip the sentence and then identify the subject in each of the following sentences:

- 1) The **consequences** *of the professor's teaching style* **are** abundantly obvious.
- 2) The **girl**, *who was already shy*, **was** even more timid after her family's move.
- 3) *As soon as she saw the flowers blooming*, **Sally was** a happy girl.

Tricky Nouns/Pronouns when figuring out Subject-Verb Agreement

Collective nouns: Although collective nouns suggest a lot of people or things, they are NOT plural! These are nouns that are singular but collectively include multiple items.

The audience in the auditorium is cheering. (The collective noun *audience* and the verb “*is*” are both singular.)

Some collective nouns: *team, committee, company, city, group, country, species, class*

Indefinite pronouns: Indefinite pronouns do not name the words they replace, yet they function as nouns. Some indefinite pronouns are always singular, some are always plural, and some may be either singular or plural.

Singular: *each, either, neither, everyone, every, everybody, anyone, no one, nobody*

Plural: *both, few, many, several*

Singular/Plural: *none, any, some, all*

KEY: To better hear proper verb agreement, replace a singular subject in your sentence with the pronoun “s/he” or a plural subject with the pronoun “they.” This helps you to hear/check the proper verb form.