

## Subject-verb agreement

It is important that the verb in a sentence agrees with the subject. If a subject is singular, the verb must also be singular. If the subject is plural, then the verb must be plural. We call this **subject-verb agreement**. To work out which form of a verb to use, you need to work out these things about the subject:

- Is the subject singular or plural?
- Is the subject first person, second person or third person?

The table below shows you how subject-verb agreement works in the simple present tense.

Singular subject		Plural subject	
First person (I)	I <i>walk</i> .	First person (we)	We <i>walk</i> .
Second person (you)	You <i>walk</i> .	Second person (you)	You <i>walk</i> .
Third person (he, she, it)	He, she, it <i>walks</i> .	Third person (they)	They <i>walk</i> .

**Note:** The verb for the third person singular ends with -s in the simple present tense. The verb for the third person plural does not end in -s in the simple present tense.

**Examples:**

singular subject

↓

**The boy**

↑

third person singular

singular verb

↓

**reads**

↑

simple present tense

a book.

plural subject

↓

**The boys**

↑

third person plural

plural verb

↓

**read**

↑

simple present tense

a book.

**Note:** In the simple past tense a regular verb stays the same for singular and plural subjects in the first, second and third person. For example: I *walked*, you *walked*, he *walked*, we *walked*, you *walked*, they *walked*.



Some verbs can fit in more than one rectangle.

- Place the verbs in the list below into the correct rectangles. Make sure that the verbs you choose match the subjects in the boxes.

buy dance sees dances write screams bites  
laughs walk buys studies throw study scream

**I**

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**Pieter**

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**We**

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2. Circle the correct verb in each sentence below.

- a) You (brush/brushes) your teeth twice a day.
- b) Mosquitoes (is/are) irritating insects.
- c) We (study/studies) well together.
- d) I (eat/eats) sweet potato for supper.
- e) My father never (watch/watches) TV.
- f) It (has/have) been raining all day.
- g) He (deserve/deserves) to win the race.
- h) The rain (fall/falls) over the crops.

3. Make sure the subjects and verbs in the sentences below agree. Circle the correct subject in each sentence and underline the verbs. Note that some sentences include auxiliary verbs.

- a) I / (He) washes all the cars in the garage.
- b) (My sister/My sisters) goes to the shop.
- c) (Sibusiso/They) is catching the taxi to town.
- d) (The children/He) drink juice.
- e) (The horse/The horses) gallop across the veld.
- f) (The hairdresser/The hairdressers) braids my hair.
- g) (The old lady/The old ladies) go to the clinic.
- h) (The family/All the families) watches the news at night.

4. Some of the sentences below are incorrect because the subjects and verbs do not agree. Tick the sentences that are correct and put a cross next to those that are incorrect. If a sentence is incorrect, rewrite it so the subject and verb agree.

- a) Monkeys lives in treetops (X). Monkeys live in treetops.
- b) Leandra say goodbye to her friend. (\_\_\_)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c) She brush her hair. (\_\_\_)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d) The policeman catch the thief. (\_\_\_)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e) The teenager does his homework well. (\_\_\_)  
\_\_\_\_\_



### Note

Uncountable nouns need a singular verb, for example: The grass is green. We slice bread. I read the information.