

SUBJECT AND VERB AGREEMENT

1. A Verb must agree with its Subject in Number and Person. .

Often, by what is called the 'Error of Proximity', the verb is made to agree with the subject which is near to it rather than to its proper Subject.

Example-1:

- The quality of the mangoes were not good.

In this sentence, the verb is 'were' whereas the proper Subject is the quality of the Mangoes.

Since 'the quality of the Mangoes' is singular in nature, the singular verb 'was' should have been used in stead of 'were'.

So the correct sentence is:

- The quality of the Mangoes was not good.

Example-2:

- The introduction of coffee and other beverages have not been without some effect.

In this sentence as well, the proper Subject is 'The introduction of'. This Subject is singular.

So the verb 'has', meant for the singular Subject, should have been used in place of 'have' which is a plural verb.

The correct sentence is:

- The introduction of coffee and other beverages has not been without some effects.

Example-3:

- The results of the recognition is this fact is seen in a gradual manner.

In this sentence, the proper Subject is 'The results of the recognition' which is plural.

But the singular verb 'is' has been used in place of 'are'.

So the correct sentence is:

- The results of introduction are seen in a gradual manner.

This sentence is an example for Subject-and-Verb-agreement.

2. The verb must agree with the Subject when the Subject is the combination of two or more nouns or pronouns joined by 'and'.

Example-1:

- Fire and water does not agree.

In this sentence, the subject is 'Fire and water' which is plural in form.

But the sentence uses the verb 'does' which treats only the noun 'water' as the Subject.

So the correct sentence is:

- Fire and water do not agree.

Example-2:

- Honor and glory is the reward.

Here also the Subject is in plural form i.e. Honor and glory.

So the correct form of the sentence is:

- Honor and glory are the rewards.

This sentence is an example for Subject-and-Verb-agreement.

Here not only the verb has been changed to make the sentence correct one.

But also the corresponding change in the object 'reward' has been made.

The object 'reward' has been changed into 'rewards'.

But when the two nouns refer to the same person or to the same idea, only the singular form of the verb should be used.

Example-3:

- The novelist and poet are dead.

In this sentence, both the novelist and the poet are one and the same person.

In case they are different person, this sentence might have been in the following form

- The novelist and the poet are dead.

The absence of the article 'the' before the word 'poet' indicates that both the persons are one and the same person.

So the correct sentence is:

- The novelist and poet is dead.

Example-4:

- My friend and benefactor have come.

This sentence is a wrong one.

The correct sentence is:

- My friend and benefactor has come.

This sentence is an example for Subject-and-Verb-agreement.

3. When the Subject is formed by the conjunctions such as 'with' as well as, along with etc...' the verb should be in singular form.

Example-1:

- The house, with its contents, was insured.

In this sentence, the Subject is only the house, not its contents although the verb 'insure' refers to the contents as well.

Examples:

- Justice, as well as mercy, allows it.
- English, as well as Japanese, is taught there.
- Silver, as well as Cotton, has fallen in price.

These sentence sre examples for Subject-and-Verb-agreement.

4. Two singular Subjects connected by 'or' or 'nor' require a singular verb.

Example-1:

- Our happiness or our sorrow is largely due to our actions.

Here the Subject is either 'our happiness' or 'our sorrow'.

So it requires only singular verb.

Example-2:

- Neither food nor water is to be found here.

Here also the Subject is either 'food' or 'water'.

So it requires singular verb.

Examples:

- Either the cat or the dog is good for you.
- Either this College or any other college in this country is suitable for you.

NOTE:

When one of the Subjects, joined by 'or' or 'nor', is plural, the verb must be plural. The plural object should be placed near the verb.

Example-1:

- Neither the Chairman nor the members were present.

Here in this sentence, the Subject that the verb takes 'the members' has been placed near the verb 'were'.

Example-2:

- Neither his brother nor his parents were with him.

Her also the same system has been followed.

Examples:

- Neither your father nor your friends are welcome to the function.
- Neither he nor his employees attended the festival

This sentence is an example for Subject-and-Verb-agreement.

5. The words ‘many, neither, many a, each, everyone, every etc..’ require only singular verbs.

Example-1:

- Many a students is standing in the canteen

Although the word preceding the verb ‘is’ is plural in nature, the correct verb is singular one ‘is’, because of the presence of ‘many a’.

Example-2:

- Each of these items is found in Sri Lanka.

Here also the Subject is singular in form ‘each of...’
So the verb is in singular form.

This sentence is an example for Subject-and-Verb-agreement.

Examples:

- Neither of the two men was strong.
- Neither of two brothers was selected to the post.
- Every one of the prisons is full.

These sentences are examples for Subject-and-Verb-agreement.

6. When the Subjects, joined by ‘or’ or ‘nor’, the verb agrees with the Subject which is near to the verb.

Example-1:

- Either you or I am mistaken

Here the Subject that the verb takes is the pronoun 'I'.

The same sentence can be rewritten as:

- Either I or you are mistaken.

Although, this sentence is grammatically correct, the previous sentence is preferred to this one.

Because, when we use many pronouns in a sentence, we have to use them in the order:

Third person, second person and the first person.

Such a usage constitutes **PERFECT ENGLISH**.

Examples:

- Neither he nor you are a member of this organization.
- Either you or I am to blame.
- Neither he nor they have agreed to help me.
- Either You or he has consulted me.

These sentences are examples for Subject-and-Verb-agreement.