ENGLISH, LITERACY, AND COMMUNICATION

Subject-verb agreement

Difficulty level: Intermediate

English, Literacy, and Communication

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Overview of the concept

This is how you make the verb match its subject in your writing, like in a job application or an essay, so your sentences sound right to anyone reading them. A singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb, and the reader expects that match without thinking about it. When the verb does not match, the sentence sounds wrong even if the idea is clear. Getting it right keeps your writing smooth, so the reader follows your point instead of tripping over the grammar.



Rule

Subject-verb agreement: the verb must match its subject in number.

A singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb.

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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Fix: The dogs barks loudly.

SOLUTION

Find the subject: 'dogs' is plural.

A plural subject needs a plural verb: 'bark', not 'barks'.

Fixed: The dogs bark loudly.

EXAMPLE 2

Q Fix: She walk to school every day.

SOLUTION

Find the subject: 'She' is singular.

A singular subject like 'She' in the present tense needs 'walks'.

Fixed: She walks to school every day.

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Practice questions

1

Fix: The cat sleep all day.

A The cat sleeps all day.

B The cat sleep every day.

C The cat sleeping all day.

D The cat sleep all days.

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2

Fix: They plays soccer.

A They plays soccer every day.

B They play soccer.

C They playing soccer.

D They plays soccers.

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3 Fix: He have a bike.

A He have a red bike.

B He has a bike.

C He having a bike.

D He has a bikes.

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4 Fix: The books is on the shelf.

A The books is on the table.

B The books are on the shelf.

C The books being on the shelf.

D The book are on the shelf.

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5 Fix: Maria like apples.

A Maria like oranges.

B Maria likes apples.

C Maria liking apples.

D Maria likes apple.

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6 Fix: We goes to school.

A We goes to school every day.

B We go to school.

C We going to school.

D We goes to schools.

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7 Fix: The bird sing in the morning.

A The bird sing every morning.

B The bird sings in the morning.

C The bird singing in the morning.

D The birds sings in the morning.

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8 Fix: I am ready. (already correct? answer Yes or fix)

A Yes, already correct.

B I is ready.

C I are ready.

D No, it needs fixing.

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9 Fix: The children runs fast.

A The children runs every day.

B The children run fast.

C The children running fast.

D The child run fast.

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10 Fix: She do her homework.

A She do her homework every day.

B She does her homework.

C She doing her homework.

D She does her homeworks.

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ANSWER KEY

1. The cat sleeps all day.

2. They play soccer.

3. He has a bike.

4. The books are on the shelf.

5. Maria likes apples.

6. We go to school.

7. The bird sings in the morning.

8. Yes, already correct.

9. The children run fast.

10. She does her homework.

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