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Subject-Verb Concord

You already know what 'subject' and 'verb' are in a sentence. 'Subject' is a noun or pronoun that tells us what the sentence talks about and 'verb' represents the action in the sentence. Then what is 'subject verb concord/agreement'? It means that the subject and verb in a sentence should agree or match, otherwise the sentence will not sound right. Let's understand the basic rules of subject-verb agreement.

Rule 1

The verb and subject must agree in number (singular or plural)

This means that if the subject is singular, the verb should be singular and if the subject is plural, the verb should also be plural.

Examples:

- He plays football. (SINGULAR)
- They play football. (PLURAL)

Rule 2

The number of the subject (singular or plural) will not change due to words/phrases in between the subject and the verb.

Examples:

- One of the glasses is empty. (Here, since the subject is 'one', the verb should be 'is').
- The bouquet of red roses smells so sweet. (Here, since 'bouquet' is the subject and not 'roses', the verb should be 'smells' and not 'smell')

Rule 3

Subjects that are joined by 'and' in a sentence, use a plural verb. Subjects that are joined by 'either/or', 'neither/nor' use a singular verb.

Examples:

- Radha and Meera are coming home.
- Neither Akshay nor Rohit is coming home.
- My dad or my mom is arriving today.

Rule 4

The verb in a sentence containing 'or', 'either/or', 'neither/nor' agrees with the noun or pronoun closest to it.

Examples:

- Neither the shoes nor the bag matches the dress. (Here, 'bag' is closest to the verb, hence 'matches')
- Neither the bag nor the shoes match the dress. (Here, 'shoes' is closest to the verb, hence 'match').

Rule 5

When the subject is followed by words such as 'as well as', 'along with', 'besides', 'not' etc. ignore them and use a singular verb if the subject is singular.

Examples:

- Matt, as well as his dog, is expected shortly.
- Pratik, along with his brother, is going to school.

Rule 6

In sentences that begin with 'here', 'there', the true subject usually follows the verb.

Examples:

- Here are the chocolates.
- There is a big puddle on the

Rule 7

In sentences that include sums of money, periods of time or distances etc. (as a unit), use singular verbs.

Examples:

- 500 rupees is a high price to pay.
- 62 years is the minimum age of retirement.
- 10 kilometers is too far to walk.

Rule 8

In the case of words such as 'a lot of', 'all', 'some' etc. in a sentence, pay attention to the noun after 'of'. If the noun after 'of' is singular then use a singular verb, if plural, use a plural verb.

Examples:

- All of the cake is gone.
- All of the cakes are gone.
- A lot of the cake is gone.
- A lot of the cakes are gone.
- Some of the cake is gone.
- Some of the cakes are gone.

Rule 9

In the case of collective nouns such as 'group', 'population', 'family', in a sentence, the verb can be singular or plural depending on their use in the sentence.

Examples:

- Most of my family is here OR are here.
- Half of the population was against the bill OR were against the bill.

Rule 10

In sentences that express a wish, request or contrary to fact, the word 'were' is used instead of 'was'.

Examples:

- I wish my sister were here.
- I wish i were a bird

Rule 11

Nouns such as 'mathematics', 'civics', 'news' etc. while plural in form, are singular in meaning and use singular verbs.

Examples:

- Mathematics is very difficult for some people.
- The news is very saddening.