

Other Problem Subjects

Reteaching

Here are some types of subjects that require special attention.

A **collective noun** refers to a group of people or things. Examples include *team*, *family*, *committee*, *jury*, *herd*, *class*, *staff*, and *majority*. When a collective noun refers to a group as a unit, it takes a singular verb. When it refers to a group acting as individuals, it takes a plural verb.

The team **has** won its fifth straight game. (acting as one)

The team **have** tried on their new uniforms. (acting separately)

Some nouns ending in *-s* appear to be plural but are really singular in meaning and therefore take a singular verb. Examples include *news*, *measles*, *mumps*, *civics*, *mathematics*, *physics*, and *molasses*.

Measles is one of the diseases tamed by modern medicine.

Titles of works of art, literature, and music are usually treated as singular. Words and phrases that refer to weights, measures, numbers, and lengths of time are usually treated as singular.

Millions of Cats is still a popular children's book.

Ten cents is the daily fine for an overdue book.

Three weeks is the usual loan period for checking out a library book.

Using Verbs That Agree with Problem Subjects

In each sentence, underline the subject and the form of the verb that agrees with it.

1. An orchestra (consists, consist) of a large group of musicians.
2. Seventy-five (is, are) the typical number of members in a symphony orchestra.
3. Over one-half of the orchestra (plays, play) stringed instruments.
4. *Romeo and Juliet* (is, are) a favorite among members of a symphony orchestra.
5. The audience loudly (expresses, express) its appreciation for a great performance.
6. News of celebrity guest conductors (travels, travel) quickly from one music lover to another.
7. My class (has, have) chartered a bus to attend a concert next week.
8. *Tales from the Vienna Woods* always (draws, draw) a good crowd.
9. Three hours (is, are) a long time to wait in line for tickets.
10. However, this crowd of music lovers (is, are) willing to wait even longer.
11. The physics of sound (guides, guide) architects who plan new music halls.
12. The newspaper staff (were, was) divided in their opinions about the election.
13. Mathematics (are, is) Olivia's favorite subject.
14. Three o'clock (are, is) a good time to meet.
15. The majority of the student body (participate, participates) in co-curricular activities.
16. (Are, is) two dollars an hour a fair wage?
17. The jury (state, states) that the woman is not guilty.
18. Claude Monet's *Water Lilies* (were, was) one of a series he painted when almost blind.

Agreement Problems in Sentences

Reteaching

In some sentences, the placement of the subject and verb makes it hard to choose the right verb form.

A verb always agrees with its subject, never with a predicate nominative. A **predicate nominative** is a noun or pronoun that follows a linking verb and names or explains the subject. In these examples, the subject is underlined once; the predicate nominative is underlined twice.

The danger in this area **is** careless campers.
Careless campers **are** the danger.

A subject can follow a verb or come between parts of a verb phrase in the following types of sentences.

As questions: Does this watchtower **overlook** the entire forest?
This watchtower **does overlook** the entire forest.

Beginning with *Here* or *There*: Here **are** the volunteer firefighters.
The volunteer firefighters **are** here.

Beginning with a phrase: Over the trees **rises** a smoky plume.
A smoky plume **rises** over the trees.

The easy way to find the true subject of these sentences is to: (1) turn the sentence around so that the subject comes before the verb; (2) determine whether the subject is singular or plural; and (3) make sure the subject and verb agree.

Solving Agreement Problems

In each sentence, find and underline the subject. Then underline the correct verb.

- (Is, Are) you able to imagine a trip through time to Cleveland in 1944?
- The sound (is, are) two explosions of tanks of natural gas within 20 minutes of each other.
- There (was, were) a leak in one of the huge tanks.
- The results of the leak and the explosions (is, are) a disaster.
- Surrounding the tanks (is, are) factories and many small homes.
- Because of the intense flash of heat, there (is, are) many people killed instantly.
- In addition to the first destruction (come, comes) many scattered explosions in the streets.
- How (does, do) firefighters cope with vaporizing gas running into sewers and, from time to time, blowing out manhole covers?
- Through 20 blocks of the city (spread, spreads) the vicious flames.
- Running from place to place (is, are) people searching for family members.
- Miraculous escapes (is, are) the most exciting topic of discussion.
- Soon, around the burning district (is, are) shelters set up in schools and churches.
- The cost in human lives (is, are) 130 people killed.
- Also, there (is, are) 79 homes, 2 factories, 217 cars, 7 trailers, and 1 tractor destroyed.