

Agreement of the verb with the subject

A finite verb must agree with its subject in number and person. Read the examples given below.

I am wrong.

She is wrong.

They are mistaken.

That is his car.

She looks upset.

I know him well.

As you can see, the exact form of the verb used in a sentence is determined by the number and person of the subject.

Error of proximity

When the subject is a phrase consisting of more than one noun, students sometimes choose a verb that agrees with the noun that stands near it. This can cause error.

Study the examples given below.

The state of affairs are sure to cause him anxiety.

Here the student used a verb that agrees with the plural noun affairs. This leads to an error because the real subject is the singular noun state (of affairs).

The state of affairs is sure to cause him anxiety.

The introduction of reforms was not liked by the aristocracy. (NOT The introduction of reforms were...)
Here the real subject is the introduction (of reforms), and not reforms.

The conjunction and

Two or more singular nouns or pronouns joined by and require a plural verb. But if two nouns joined by and refer to the same person or thing or suggest one idea to the mind, the verb is singular.

Examples are given below.

Disraeli, the statesman and novelist, is dead. (Here the two nouns statesman and novelist refer to the same person.)

The horse and carriage is ready. (NOT The horse and carriage are ready.)

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Slow and steady wins the race.

Bread and butter is wholesome.

As well as, together with etc

Two singular nouns joined by the words/phrases with, as well as, besides, together with, no less than and similar expressions require a singular verb.

Silver as well as gold is a precious metal.

No one, besides Jack, knows it.

Mark, and not you, has won the prize.

John together with his friends was present at the venue.