

Subject-verb agreement: Quick overview

The verb should agree with the subject in number and person.

Here is a quick overview of the basic rules of subject-verb agreement.

When two or more singular subjects are connected by 'and', the verb is plural.

Rohan and Sania go to the same school.

Fire and water do not agree.

Oil and water do not mix.

He and his wife have arrived.

If two singular nouns refer to the same person, the verb must be singular in number.

My friend and benefactor has come.

My uncle and guardian has given me the permission to go abroad.

Note that the article is used only once when the two nouns refer to the same person. If we are referring to different persons, we should use the article before each noun.

When two singular subjects preceded by each or every are connected by 'and', the verb should be singular.

Every boy and every girl was ready.

Each man and each woman has a vote.

Two or more singular subjects connected by or, nor, either...or or neither...nor take a singular verb.

No nook or corner was left unexplored by them.

Neither he nor I was there.

Either Harry or Tom has stolen the money.

Neither praise nor blame seems to affect him.

When subjects joined by or or nor are of different numbers, the verb must be plural and the plural subject should be placed close to the verb.

Neither the manager nor his colleagues were present.

Neither James nor his friends were invited to the party.

When the subjects joined by or or nor are of different persons, the verb should agree in person with the subject nearest to it.

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Either you or he has to finish the job. (Here the verb 'has' agrees with the third person singular pronoun 'he'.)