



Subject/Verb Agreement



Writing Center Hours: 8:30 AM - 8:30 PM M-Th,
8:30 AM- 4:30 PM F, 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM S-S
Email: okc.tutoring@okstate.edu
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Definition: Subject-verb agreement is the grammatical rule that the verb or verbs in a sentence must match the number, person, and gender of the subject; in English, the verb needs to match just the number and sometimes the person.

Basic Subject/Verb Agreement:

Present Tense of “to be”

| Person | Singular | Plural |
|---------------|----------------|------------|
| First Person | (I) am | (We) are |
| Second Person | (You) are | (You) are |
| Third Person | (He/She/It) is | (They) are |

Examples:

You are always welcome in our home.

I am running a marathon tomorrow.

It is raining even though it is sunny.

To Be Future Tense

First, second, and third person all use “will be” for future tense

I will study while you will be in your tutoring session.

It will be a great day because he will have class outside.



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To Be Past Tense

| Person | Singular | Plural |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| First Person | (I) was | (We) were |
| Second Person | (You) were | (You) were |
| Third Person | (He/She/It) was | (They) were |

Examples:

You were late for class.

I was cooking dinner for my family.

It was a really difficult exam even though the material was all on the homework.

The Third Person Exception:

When using present tense verbs in English, the third person form always contains an “s” at the end.

| Person | Singular | Plural |
|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| First Person | (I) need | (We) needed |
| Second Person | (You) run | (You) ran |
| Third Person | (He/She/It) <u>wants</u> | (They) wanted |



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Common Subject/Verb Errors:

Collective Nouns:

A collective noun that refers to a group of subjects acts as a singular noun.

The crowd is excited to see their favorite band.

Interruptive Prepositional Phrases:

It doesn't matter what comes in between the subject and the verb, so long as they still agree in the end.

The manner in which you spoke to those people is disrespectful.

Singular Words ending in “s”:

Beware of words that refer to one object but act as a plural word.

The scissors are on the desk, and the pants are in the closet.

Either/Or and Neither/Nor:

Neither and either, when used as pronouns, imply that two items are being discussed, but they act as a singular nouns.

Neither was very good.

When either/or or neither/nor is used as a conjunction to replace the word and, you follow the second item listed in the sentence.

Neither John nor Sally was at school today.

Neither John nor his sisters were at school today.