

Subject Verb Agreement

A complete sentence must have both a subject and a verb. For example, in the sentence, **The girl takes the bus to school**, *girl* is the subject and *takes* is the verb. Subjects are nouns; therefore, they can be counted. There can be one girl, or there can be many girls. The example sentence above is about *one* girl. This means that the subject is *singular*; it is about a single noun. If the sentence were about many *girls* taking the bus, the subject *girls* would be plural.

If the subject noun of a sentence is singular, the verb must take a singular form.

If the subject noun of a sentence is plural, the verb must take a plural form.

When the subject and verb of a sentence match in number, this is called Subject Verb Agreement.

Rule of “S”

This rule pertains to subject nouns that can be replaced by third person pronouns (he/she/it), (example: girl, toy, baby, window, door, dog, father). Notice that the nouns in the example all have an “s” at the end when you put them in their plural forms, (example: girls, toys, babies, windows, doors, dogs, fathers). When such a noun is in its singular form (without the “s”), the verb takes an “s” at the end.

Example: The girl takes the bus to school.

When the same noun is in its plural form, (with an “s”), the verb does not take an “s” at the end.

Example: The girls take the bus to school.

There is an “s” at the end of either the subject or the verb. This is the Rule of “S.” Another way to think about this is, when the subject is singular, the verb takes an “s’ at the end—’s” is for singular.

Many teachers feel that it is not wise to depend on the Rule of “S” because it does not work for all subjects and verbs. The best way to develop confidence in subject verb agreement is through...

Practice in Subject Verb Agreement

Each of the following sentences is missing a verb. Fill in the verb so that it agrees with the subject in number.

1. My brother _____ at me.
2. Sarah _____ her mother to take her to the doctor.
3. Babies _____ when they are not fed often enough.
4. Juan and Juanito _____ brothers.
5. English 255 _____ a class at Cabrillo College.
6. Rachel _____ the window.
7. Tera _____ the students how to write an essay.
8. Our teacher _____ a new essay in class yesterday.
9. Students at Cabrillo College can _____ for classes online and over the telephone now.
10. Why don't you _____ your counselor for advice on next semester's schedule?