Chapter 6

Subject-Verb Agreement
Which is right?

• They **are** meeting in the basement.
• They **is** meeting in the basement.

• In the correct sentence, the subject and verb agree in number.
• This chapter is about subject/verb agreement.
Learning Objectives: Level 1

• Locate the subjects of verbs despite prepositional phrases, intervening elements, and inverted sentence structure.

• Make verbs agree with subjects joined by *and*, with company and organization names, and with titles.
TIPS:

• When locating subjects, *ignore* prepositional phrases.

• The subject of a verb will *not* be the object of a preposition.

• Some of the most common prepositions: *of, to, in, from, for, with, at, and by*

• Other words that occasionally act as prepositions: *except, but, like, and between*
What are the **subjects** of the following sentences?

One of the companies is hiring new employees.

E-mail messages from the president are important.

Everyone except Stephanie and Todd is working.
Intervening Elements

When locating subjects, ignore intervening groups of words such as those introduced by in addition to such as as well as Including together with
TeleCon, Inc., along with several other companies, is submitting bids.

The buyer, as well as two of our operators, is examining the equipment.
In sentences beginning with **there** or **here**, look for the true subject after the verb.

**There** are several new products. (**Invert the sentence**: *Several new products are there.*)

**Here** is a list of potential customers. (**Invert**: *A list of potential customers is here.*)
What are the subjects of the following sentences?

There are several valid arguments.

Here is a list of possible agenda items.
4 Inverted Sentences

Look for the subject after the verb in inverted sentences and in questions.

Across the street is a recycling center.

(Invert: A recycling center is across the street.)

Is one of the technicians going to call?

(Invert: One of the technicians is going to call?)
What are the **subjects** of the following sentences?

Down the block is a new gift shop.

Is one of the graduates going to **apply**?
Compound subjects joined by **and** require a plural verb.

Our football team **and** our baseball team **are** doing well this year.

Being informed **and** studying the issues **are** important.
What are the subjects of the following sentences?

Our office manager and our sales manager are interviewing applicants.

Writing concisely and proofreading carefully are important.
However, when *each* or *every* precedes subjects joined by *and*, the subject is always singular. This is because the subjects are referred to individually.

*Each* period, comma, and semicolon *is* important. [Think: *Each single* period, *(each) single* comma, and *(each) single* semicolon IS important.]

*Every* (individual) driver and *(every individual)* pedestrian *is* upset over the road closure.
Company names, organization names, and titles of publications are singular and require singular verbs. (This is different in the UK.)

Starbucks is hiring new baristas.

Miller, Minski, and Steinberg, Inc., is hiring.

The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth is a popular business book.
What are the subjects of the following sentences?

Delta Airlines is based in Atlanta, Georgia.

Fagan, Dunn, and Roe, Inc., is expanding.

*Seven Secrets to Successful Investing* is a top seller at Amazon.com.
Try Your Skill

1. A list of names and addresses **has** been prepared.

2. The **house**, along with its contents, **was** insured.

3. There **is** a magazine and a book lying on the table.

Identify the subject; then choose the correct verb to complete these sentences.
Try Your Skill


5. Across town **(is/are)** some of the best restaurants.

6. Our CEO and our CFO **(plans/plan)** to release the financial figures this week.

7. Every car, truck, and van **(has, have)** to be inspected.
Learning Objectives: Level 2

• Make verbs agree with subjects joined by or or nor.

• Select the correct verbs to agree with indefinite pronouns and collective nouns.
Special Rules for Subject-Verb Agreement

1. **Or and Nor**
2. **Indefinite Pronouns**
3. **Collective Nouns**
When two or more subjects are joined by or or nor, the verb should agree with the subject that is closer to the verb. (This would be the one following or or nor).

Neither the house nor its outbuildings are insured.
Neither the outbuildings nor the house is insured.
Either Kim or you are responsible for supplies.
Either you or Kim is responsible for supplies.
Indefinite Pronouns

Some indefinite pronouns are always singular, some are always plural, and some may be singular or plural depending upon the words to which they refer.
### Indefinite Pronouns (continued)

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<th>Always Plural</th>
<th>Singular or Plural</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something</td>
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</table>
Each of the policies is separate. (Always singular)

Few of the companies are interested. (Always plural)

Some of the pie is missing. (Some refers to pie, which is singular.)

Some of the jelly beans are missing. (Some refers to jelly beans, which is plural.)
Collective nouns such as **faculty**, **committee**, or **council** may be singular or plural depending on their mode of operation. However, most of the time they are single.

When a collective noun operates as a single unit, its verb should be singular.

The council **is** meeting Thursday.

Next week the faculty **is** voting.
When the elements of a collective noun operate separately, the verb is plural.

The **faculty** **were** concerned about their room assignments. (They were not **all** assigned the same room.)

(Better to say, *The faculty members were concerned about their room assignments.*)
Try Your Skill

1. Either the book title or its chapter titles (has/have) to be revised.

2. Most of the research for the report (is/are) completed.

3. Most of the auditors (has/have) arrived.
Try Your Skill

4. Either of the health plans (is/are) acceptable.

5. Each of the witnesses (is/are) scheduled to testify today.

6. The council (is/are) voting to adopt the measure.

7. The council (is/are) taking their seats. (pretty lame)
Learning Objectives: Level 3

• Make verbs agree with a *number/the number*; quantities and measures; fractions, portions, and percentages; and *who* and *that* clauses.

• Achieve subject–verb agreement with phrases and clauses as subjects and with subject complements.
Additional Rules for Subject-Verb Agreement

1. The Number and A Number
2. Quantities and Measures
3. Fractions, Portions, Percentages
4. Who and That Clauses
5. Phrases and Clauses
The Number and A Number

As sentence subjects, the number is always singular; a number is always plural.

The number of requests is growing yearly. (Singular)

A number of stocks are traded daily. (Plural)
When they refer to total amounts, quantities and measures are singular. When they refer to individual units that can be counted, quantities and measures are plural.

Five yards of fabric is the amount needed to complete that garment. (Quantity as a single unit)

Five days are needed to complete the project. (Quantity as individual units)
Fractions, portions, and percentages may be singular or plural depending on the nouns to which they refer.

One third of the bonds have been sold.
   (One third refers to bonds and, therefore, is plural.)

One third of the job has been completed.
   (One third refers to job and, therefore, is singular.)
A portion of our management team favors the plan. \(\text{(Portion} \text{ refers to team and, therefore, is singular.)}\)

A large percentage of the employees also favor the plan. \(\text{(Percentage} \text{ refers to employees and, therefore, is plural.)}\)
Verbs in **who** and **that** clauses must agree in number and person with the nouns to which they refer.

In **who** and **that** clauses introduced by **one of**, the verb is usually **plural** because *it refers to* the object of the preposition.

In **who** and **that** clauses introduced by the **only one of**, the verb is singular.
Nan Rivera is **one of** those instructors who **are** very professional. (The verb **are** is controlled by **instructors**.)

At&T is **only one of** the wireless carriers that **is** able to sell the iPhone. (The word **only** suggests that the writer wishes to emphasize the singularity of the subject.)
A technique to help you remember

Begin your reading of sentences containing **one of those who** clauses with the word **of**.

Instead of reading the sentence as:

*Nan Rivera is one of those instructors who are very professional.*

Begin reading the sentence with **of**:

*Of those instructors who are very professional, Nan Rivera is one.*
Use a singular verb when the subject of a sentence is a phrase or a clause.

Learning to operate all the pieces of office equipment **is** a big task.

Relying too much on others **is** detrimental.
1. A number of registered students (is/are) eligible for financial aid.

2. The number of registered students (has/have) declined.

3. Fifty dollars (is/are) the price of monthly Internet service.
Identify the subject; then choose the correct verb to complete these sentences.

4. One hundred pennies is/are needed to make a dollar.

5. Two thirds of the businesses has/have already complied with the regulation.

6. Two thirds of the presentation includes/include PowerPoint slides.
7. Professor Daly is one of those professors who (get/gets) results with (her/their) students.

8. Jeffrey Church is the only one of the instructors who (allow, allows) cell phones.