



## Unit 29 – Subject-Verb Agreement (*All of the money is.. All of the people are..*)

A) What is fundamental in English is that subjects and verbs must agree in number. Compare these basic rules:

i. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular too:

-> **He** studies every day.

Exception: The first person pronoun, 'I' takes a plural verb (*I play, I clean, etc.*).

ii) If the subject is plural, the verb must also be plural:

-> **They** study every day.

iii) When the subject is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by '**and**', use a plural verb:

-> **Emily** and her **classmates** study after school at the library every day.

-> The **number of people** working from home and the **percentage of companies** that allow work from home are indicative of a paradigm shift in society.

iv) When there is one subject and more than one verb, the verbs in the sentence must agree with the subject:

-> **Vacations** are a way to relieve stress and give people an opportunity to see the world.

-> **Chris** is incredibly generous and donates much of his free time to helping those in need.

B) Subject complements, clauses and complex subjects:

i) A verb must agree with its subject, *not its subject complement*:

-> **Melissa**, as well as her family members, is excited to finally graduate tomorrow.

-> **Strategies** that the team uses to effectively score on its opponents include forechecking and hitting.

-> Compare: **Taxes** are a problem. *or:* **A problem** is taxes.

ii) When the subject of the sentence is complex, the verb must agree with the main noun in the subject.

-> **Hundreds of protesters** **unhappy with recent tax reform** have voiced their concerns.

-> **The main reason** **that he has been giving for being late** is that he has been very stressed lately.

iii) When the subject actually follows the verb, the same subject/verb agreement rules apply:

-> Written on the board were **the names** of the students. *or:* **The names** of students were written..

-> Written on the board was **the list** of students. *or:* **The list** of students was written..

iv) If the subject is a clause, a singular verb is generally used:

-> **To force these kids to study until midnight** is unreasonable and unfair.

-> **Arriving at the office at 7am** shows us just how diligent they really are.

**Note:** -> If a what-clause is used as a subject, a singular verb comes before a singular noun:

-> (What interests them) is the flexible **schedule**.

However, either a singular or plural verb can come before a plural noun:

-> What interests them is/are the flexible **class times**.

C) Countable & Uncountable Nouns:

i) Some countable nouns such as *earnings, goods, odds*, etc. only have a plural form and so take a plural verb:

-> The **proceeds** from the fundraising go to support a local animal shelter.

-> Domestic **goods** have the advantage of faster delivery times.

**Also:** *belongings, clothes, congratulations, earnings, jeans, outskirts, riches, savings, scissors, stairs, wages*

**Note:** -> Certain countable nouns like *data, media, etc.* do not contain an 's', however they take a singular verb:

-> A significant amount of the company **data** is stored online in a cloud service.

-> The local **media** was alerted to the incident and are expected here soon.

ii) Noncountable (or uncountable) nouns exist as masses or abstract quantities that cannot be counted:

-> **Education** is important for success. *or:* **The research** in the report relates to neuroscience.

**Also:** *advice, English, information, milk, soccer, swimming, water, (homework, money, vocabulary = en masse)*



iii) Although uncountable nouns like *economics, politics, etc.* appear to contain an 's', they take a singular verb:  
-> **Gymnastics** is the event that I look forward to watching the most at the Olympics.

**Also:** *athletics, diabetes, economics, linguistics, mathematics, measles, phonetics, physics, politics, statistics*

iv) Collective nouns imply more than one person but are considered singular and usually take a singular verb:  
-> **The team** practices every Saturday morning. or: **The army** is mandatory service in South Korea.

**Note:** -> If the focus is on the individuals in the group, the plural verb is used. (This is much less common.)

-> **The council** usually arrives on time to meetings. (the 'collective' council)

-> **The council** usually arrive on time to meetings. (the 'individual' council members)

**Also:** *army, association, audience, class, club, college, committee, community, company, crew, crowd, department, family, federation, generation, government, group, institute, jury, opposition, orchestra, population, press, public, school, team, university, The Bank of Canada, CNN, Samsung, FIFA*

D) Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects -> these pronouns do not, by themselves, refer to a specific person or thing:

i) Indefinite pronouns such as *each, either, one, everyone, everybody, everything, neither* are **singular**:

-> **Each** gets a medal for finishing.

-> **Someone** will pay for this mess.

-> **Anybody** is welcome to join us.

-> **Something** is very wrong here.

-> **Neither** knows about the party.

-> **One (problem)** is how to pay for all of this.

**Also:** *another, anything, anyone, each, every, everybody, less, little, nobody, none, no-one, nothing, etc.*

ii) Indefinite pronouns that indicate portions (Quantifiers): *any of, none of, a lot of, plenty of, all of, one of, some of*

-> if the noun after **of** is singular, use a singular verb; if it is plural, use a plural verb:

-> **A lot of the forest** has disappeared.

-> **A lot of the forests** have disappeared.

-> **Half of the meeting** is over.

-> **Half of the meetings** are over.

-> **A quarter of the city** is unemployed.

-> **A quarter of the people** are unemployed.

The same rules apply to **uncountable nouns**; we use a **singular verb**:

-> All of the **money** has been received.

-> Some of the **furniture** needs to be delivered.

**Note:** -> In cases where the subjects are joined by i) *or, nor, either .. or, or*: ii) *neither .. nor*, the verb must agree with the subject closer to it:

-> Either the **library** or **café** is a suitable place to study. (*café -> is*)

-> The **professor** or her **assistants** are very willing to help you. (*assistants -> are*)

E) Relative Pronouns, such as *who, which, and that* -> when in a subject position, they take verbs that agree with their antecedents (nouns to which they refer). Compare:

-> Flour is the main **ingredient** *that* is used in bread.

*That* is a relative pronoun referring to **ingredient**. **Ingredient** takes a singular verb -> is.

-> Water and yeast are also **ingredients** *that* are used in bread.

*Ingredients* takes a plural verb, so *that* must also take a plural verb -> are.

F) In sentences beginning with 'there/here is' or 'there/here are,' the true subject follows the verb:

-> *There is* much **support** available to new students on campus.

-> *There are* many **services** available to new students on campus.

-> *Here are* **the keys**. or: *Here is* your **umbrella**.

G) Verbs expressing *time, distance, weight, and measurement* are singular when they refer to a single unit:

-> **Forty yards** is a short distance.

..and plural when they refer to separate items:

-> **Four hours** have passed since I arrived at the airport.

H) Titles of books, companies, name brands, and groups are singular or plural depending on their meaning:

-> *The Call of the Wild* is my favorite novel. -> *The Foo Fighters* are playing tomorrow night!

-> *Kiss* is playing there next weekend too. -> *Cats* is the musical I really want to see on Broadway!



## Unit 29 – Exercises:

29.1 – Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verb in brackets. **(29-A/B/G)**

1. This game \_\_\_\_\_ the most exciting one I've ever seen! (be)
2. Today, the players \_\_\_\_\_ especially excited to get started. (be)
3. My family \_\_\_\_\_ to see games together as much as we can. (go)
4. The sport \_\_\_\_\_ to ensure that fans have a great experience. (need)
5. It \_\_\_\_\_ me who bought the tickets for today's game. (be)
6. The coach, as well as the fans, \_\_\_\_\_ disappointed in the home team's performance. (be)
7. The arrival of the new jerseys \_\_\_\_\_ caused a lot of excitement among fans this season. (have)
8. The player signing autographs \_\_\_\_\_ won the MVP award and \_\_\_\_\_ a favorite of the fans. (have/be)
9. The traffic lights in front of the stadium \_\_\_\_\_ the movement of traffic under control before games. (keep)
10. Outside of the stadium \_\_\_\_\_ the private entrance of players and team staff. (be)
11. Arriving at midnight to get tickets \_\_\_\_\_ just how loyal these home fans really are! (show)
12. What interests fans the most \_\_\_\_\_ the opportunity to meet players after the game! (be)
13. 26.2 miles, a complete marathon, \_\_\_\_\_ a long distance to run! (be)
14. Approximately 40% of the apartments in the building \_\_\_\_\_ repairs. (need)
15. *One Hundred and One Dalmations* \_\_\_\_\_ my absolute favorite movie when I was young! (be)

29.2 – Circle or underline the correct form of the verb related to **countable/uncountable nouns**. **(29-C)**

1. This class is/are the most well-behaved in the entire school!
2. Following the robbery, the whole gang was/were arrested.
3. When the audience has/have settled in its/their seats, the musical will start soon after.
4. The team is/are trying on their new uniforms.
5. The bouquet of flowers was/were composed of roses, carnations and daffodils.
6. The government was/were divided on its/their views on how to proceed and vote on the matter.
7. If we move ahead with this investment, the potential savings is/are enormous.
8. The computer verified that the data was/were stored correctly.
9. The advice of my neighbor on the matter was/were to postpone selling until the market improves.
10. The statistics don't/doesn't reveal unrecorded crime.
11. The CD's, even the scratched one, is/are in the case.

29.3 – Circle or underline the correct form of the verb related to **indefinite pronouns** and **quantifiers**. **(29-D)**

1. Either my mother or father is/are attending my performance today.
2. Either your shoes or your coats is/are always left on the floor!
3. One of my sisters is/are travelling to Italy this summer. She's really excited about it!
4. Either answer is/are acceptable.
5. Although there is/are plenty of examples provided, nobody know/knows the answer to the question.
6. Each student receive/receives a gift bag for participating in today's activities.

29.4 – Circle or underline the correct form of the verb related to **relative pronouns**. **(29-E)**

1. The book *that* I borrowed from the library last month \_\_\_\_\_ due today. (be)
2. My grandfather, *who* I respect, \_\_\_\_\_ me often for coming to visit him. (thank)
3. I get quite frustrated with people *who* \_\_\_\_\_ while watching a movie. (talk)
4. The first novel, *which* was published in 2014, \_\_\_\_\_ set in the American Civil War era. (be)
5. The buildings *that* \_\_\_\_\_ scheduled for demolition, \_\_\_\_\_ knocked down today. (be/be)
6. Clearance sales, *which* take place every season, \_\_\_\_\_ a terrific way to save money. (be)
7. Ms. Johnson, *whose* son is also a student here, \_\_\_\_\_ third grade at this school. (teach)
8. Your responses to my questions, *which* I received today, \_\_\_\_\_ greatly appreciated. (be)