

Subject-Verb Concord

'Subject' is a noun or pronoun that tells us what the sentence talks about and 'verb' represents the action in the sentence.

Subject verb concord/agreement :

It means that the subject and verb in a sentence should agree or match, otherwise the sentence will not sound right. Let's understand the basic rules of subject-verb agreement.

The Basics

Basic Rule

A singular subject needs a singular verb;
a plural subject needs a plural verb.

Basic Pattern

	Singular	Plural
First person	I walk	we walk
Second person	you walk	you walk
Third person	he/she/it walks	they walk

Rule 1

The verb and subject must agree in number (singular or plural)

This means that if the subject is singular, the verb should be singular and if the subject is plural, the verb should also be plural.

Examples:

1. He plays **football**. (SINGULAR)

2. They play football. (PLURAL)

Rule 2

The number of the subject (singular or plural) will not change due to words/phrases in between the subject and the verb.

Examples:

1. One of the glasses is empty. (Here, since the subject is 'one', the verb should be 'is').
2. The bouquet of red roses smells so sweet. (Here, since 'bouquet' is the subject and not 'roses', the verb should be 'smells' and not 'smell')

Rule 3

Subjects that are joined by 'and' in a **sentence**, use a plural verb. Subjects that are joined by 'either/or', 'neither/nor' use a singular verb.

Examples:

1. Radha and Meera are coming home.
2. Neither Akshay nor Rohit is coming home.
3. My dad or my mom is arriving today.

Rule 4

The verb in a sentence containing ‘or’, ‘either/or’, ‘neither/nor’ agrees with the **noun** or pronoun closest to it.

Examples:

1. Neither the shoes nor the bag matches the dress. (Here, ‘bag’ is closest to the verb, hence ‘matches’)
2. Neither the bag nor the shoes match the dress. (Here, ‘shoes’ is closest to the verb, hence ‘match’)

Rule 5

When the subject is followed by words such as ‘as well as’, ‘along with’, ‘besides’, ‘not’ etc. ignore them and use a singular verb if the subject is singular.

Examples:

1. Matt, as well as his dog, is expected shortly.
2. Pratik, along with his brother, is going to school.

Rule 6

In sentences that begin with 'here', 'there', the true subject usually follows the verb.

Examples:

1. Here are the chocolates.
2. There is a big puddle on the road.

Rule 7

In sentences that include sums of money, periods of time or distances etc. (as a unit), use singular verbs.

Examples:

1. 500 rupees is a high price to pay.
2. 62 years is the minimum age of retirement.
3. 10 kilometers is too far to walk.

Rule 8

In the case of words such as ‘a lot of’, all’, ‘some’ etc. in a sentence, pay attention to the noun after ‘of’. If the noun after ‘of’ is singular then use a singular verb, if plural, use a plural verb.

Examples:

1. All of the cake is gone.
2. All of the cakes are gone.
3. A lot of the cake is gone.
4. A lot of the cakes are gone.
5. Some of the cake is gone.
6. Some of the cakes are gone.

Rule 9

In the case of collective nouns such as 'group, 'population', 'family', in a sentence, the verb can be singular or plural depending on their use in the sentence.

Examples:

1. Most of my family is here OR are here.
2. Half of the population was against the bill
OR were against the bill.

Rule 10

Nouns such as 'mathematics', 'civics', 'news' etc. while plural in form, are singular in meaning and use singular verbs.

Examples:

1. Mathematics is very difficult for some people.
2. The news is very saddening.

Rule 11

In sentences that express a wish, request or contrary to fact, the word 'were' is used instead of 'was.'

Examples:

1. I wish my sister were here.
2. Aditya requested that she raise her glass.

Solved Examples for You on Subject Verb Concord

Question: Choose the correct subject verb combinations in the sentences below.

- a. The lady in the car (look/looks) like your **mother**.
- b. Most of the milk (is/are) gone.
- c. One of the flowers (has/have) wilted.
- d. Either Ram or Shyam (is/are) coming today.
- e. Here (is/are) the **newspaper**.
- f. The group of dancers (is/are) here.
- g. Civics (is/are) my favorite subject.

Solution:

- a. The lady in the car looks like your mother.
- b. Most of the milk is gone.
- c. One of the flowers has wilted.
- d. Either Ram or Shyam is coming today.
- e. Here is the newspaper.
- f. The group of dancers is OR are here.
- g. Civics is my favorite subject.

MODAL VERBS

CAN

ABILITY, REQUEST

COULD

PAST ABILITY, SUGGESTION,
FUTURE POSSIBILITY

MAY

PERMISSION OR FUTURE
POSSIBILITY

MIGHT

PRESENT OR FUTURE
POSSIBILITY

MUST

NECESSITY OR OBLIGATION

**OUGHT
TO**

WHAT'S RIGHT AND CORRECT

SHALL

OFFER OR SUGGESTION

SHOULD

ADVICE OR UNCERTAIN
PREDICTION

WILL

WILLINGNESS, CERTAIN
PREDICTION OR PROMISE

WOULD

REQUEST, INVITATION OR
MAKING ARRANGEMENTS

The commonly used modal auxiliaries, also known as modal verbs, are as follows:

Can and Could

- ‘Can’ states ability: I can walk to the hotel.
- It also indicates permission: You can go to the party tonight.
- ‘Could’ is used for a request: Could I go to the party tonight?
- It is used as the past tense of can in indirect speech: You said you could help me.
- Could is used to indicate ability in the past; He could dance well when I last met him.

May and Might

- May is used to ask for permission: May I come in?
- It is used to express a wish: May you have a good life ahead.
- We can also use 'may' to express possibility: There may be some hope.
- 'May' indicates a weak possibility whereas 'might' indicates a weaker possibility: I may come today. OR She might come tomorrow.

Shall, Should, Will, Would

i) Shall is used in the first person and will in the second and third person:

- I shall not come today.
- You will work for me.
- He will not listen to you.

ii) We can also use shall in second or third person to express a threat, command or a promise:

- You shall be awarded suitably.
- He shall never show up here again.

iii) Shall can also be used in the first person to indicate an offer or suggestion:

- Shall I accompany you?

iv) Will is used to express a decision:

- I will not come today.

v) It can also be used to indicate a habit:

- He will drink a cup of coffee as usual.

vi) We can also use will for an invitation:

- Will you attend my cousin's wedding?

vii) In clauses that start with if, 'should' is used to express a probable event:

- If it should rain, the match will be called off.

Must and Ought

- 'Must' is a modal verb that can be used to express necessity: You must come tonight.
- We can also use 'must' to express fixed determination: I must have an opportunity to do what I wish.
- Ought can express certainty: We ought to win this.

Used

- It can indicate a discontinued habit: I used to go to the gym every evening.

Need

- ‘Need’ can be used to denote certainty: We need to win this.
- We can also use need to denote requirement: I need you to stay.

Dare

- Dare is a modal verb that indicates strong ability or being bold enough: How dare you argue with me?
- We can also use dare to strike a challenge: I dare you to cross the bridge in 30 seconds.