

Subject-Verb Agreement

Grammatical mistakes can often distract the reader from the quality of your paper and bring down your grade. Therefore, learning how to fix these mistakes can make your writing more clear. This worksheet will help you to understand subject-verb disagreement, which is one of the most common grammatical errors, and give you practice in fixing it.

What is subject-verb disagreement?

Subject-verb *disagreement* is when the subject of your sentence and its corresponding verb do not match in terms of singularity or plurality. This is a grammatical error that can confuse the reader, and so, you want to achieve subject-verb *agreement*.

A subject is the “doer” in the sentence. *Ask yourself: “who is taking the action in this sentence?”*

A verb is an action or state.

Sample Sentence	Subject	Verb
Julie has been studying English for the past four years	Julie	has been (state)
Germany, Ireland, and Italy are all European countries	Germany, Ireland, and Italy	are (state)
David studies English at Kwantlen Polytechnic University	David	studies
Alex and George, who study at KPU, work at a restaurant	Alex and George	work

How to check if you have subject-verb disagreement:

1. Find the subject that connects with the verb you are checking.
2. If the subject is separated from its verb, then ignore the words in between.
3. Make sure the subject and its corresponding verb match in terms of singularity or plurality.

Here are some examples of subject-verb disagreement:

Error	Why this is an error	Corrected
<i>China, India, and Japan</i> <u>is</u> an example of an Asian country.	Here, the subject is the three countries: China, India, and Japan - not just Japan. Therefore, this subject is plural.	<i>China, India, and Japan</i> <u>are</u> examples of Asian countries.
<i>Everyone</i> in my class <u>have</u> their driving license.	<i>Everyone</i> is one unit, which makes this a singular subject.	<i>Everyone</i> in my class <u>has</u> their driving license.
<i>Julie</i> <u>say</u> that she wants to move to England.	<i>Julie</i> is one person, which means that this a singular subject.	<i>Julie</i> <u>says</u> that she wants to move to England.
The <i>box of tissues</i> <u>are</u> on the table.	The subject here is not tissues, but rather “box,” which is singular.	The <i>box of tissues</i> <u>is</u> on the table.
<i>Statistics</i> <u>are</u> a very popular course.	Although the subject “statistics” looks like a plural noun, it is considered singular because it is a category name. Therefore it is one unit.	<i>Statistics</i> <u>is</u> a very popular course.



Subject-Verb Agreement

Here are some practice sentences that can help you identify and fix subject-verb disagreement. Find the subject and the verb, and correct the sentences in order to achieve subject-verb agreement:

1. Jessica and Amber is graduating next semester.

_____.

2. English is Amber's favourite subject, but Economics are Brian and Emily's favourite.

_____.

3. The pile of clothes are covering my bed.

_____.

4. Although global warming is a very important issue, some politicians refuses to make laws to stop global warming from increasing.

_____.

_____.

5. Simon say that he is going to move to another house.

_____.

6. At first, Jim and I are going to the mall, but after everyone are going to a restaurant.

_____.

7. Lisa's family have been living in Canada for many generations.

_____.

8. David own a house in Ontario.

_____.

In order to ensure that you fully understand subject-verb disagreement, as well as how to fix them, make sure to complete the practice exercise above. By applying the strategies from this exercise to your own writing, you will be on your way to more accurate subject-verb agreement.

References:

1. Buirs, B.A. (2015). *Subject-verb agreement overview*. Retrieved from Kwantlen Polytechnic University Virtual Writing Centre Moodle Website: <https://courses.kpu.ca>
2. Buirs, B.A. (2015). *Subject-verb agreement exercises*. Retrieved from Kwantlen Polytechnic University Virtual Writing Centre Moodle Website: <https://courses.kpu.ca>

