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Quick and Handy Grammar Review Subject: Verb Agreement

1. Singular and Plural Subjects

The basic rule for subject and verb agreement is that *singular subjects take singular verbs and plural subjects take plural verbs*. In general, you will only notice these differences in the **present tense**. This is because in the past tense there is no difference between the singular and plural form of the verb. The only exception to this rule is the verb *to be*, which has a different singular (was) and a plural (were) form in the past. Let's examine a few examples:

Bob (is / are) my brother's best friend.
The new vice president (come / comes) from Indiana.

Should we use **is** or **are** in these sentences? **Bob** is singular, so we should use **is**. In the second sentence, there is only one new **vice president**, so we must use **comes**.

Nan and Barb (has / have) a special relationship.
Sixteen teachers (works / work) at the new elementary school.

In these sentences, **Nan and Barb** make a *plural* subject, so we should use the verb **have**. **Sixteen teachers** are also a *plural* subject, so we choose **work** as the correct verb form.

2. Each and Every

Each and **every** are *always* followed by a singular verb. It doesn't matter if **each** and **every** are followed by one noun or a series of nouns; the singular verb is always used.

Every student **has** to take the Basic Skills Test in math.
Every man, woman, and child **is** protected by the law.
Each component **is** sold separately.
Each item on sale now **costs** only \$5.

3. Some, a lot, most of, percentages, and fractions

Like **there**, the words **some**, **a lot**, **percentages**, and **fractions** are either singular or plural depending on the noun that follows. Let's examine these examples:

Some excellent wine is made in Chile.
Some vegetables grow underground rather than above the ground.

In the first sentence, **some** describes the word *wine*, which is non-count singular, so we use the singular verb **is**. The word **some** in the second sentences describes *vegetables*, which is plural. For this reason, we use the plural verb **grow**.

1. A lot of the peaches in the basket **are** not ripe.
2. A lot of the tea sold in America **comes** from India.
3. Most of the managers at that company **work** on Saturdays.
4. Most of the water in the river near the factory **is** polluted.

Quick and Handy Grammar Review Articles *Continued*:

To decide on what verb to use after **a lot** and **most of**, analyze the noun that follows. In the first sentence, the noun *peaches* is plural, so we use the plural verb **are**. *Tea* is singular (and non-count) in the second sentence, so the singular verb **comes** is used. In sentence number three, *managers* is plural, so we use **work**. In the last sentence, though, we choose the singular verb **is** because the noun *water* is non-count **singular**.

1. Sixty percent of the students in the class **speak** three languages.
2. Four-fifths of the spectators **are** cheering for the home team.
3. Forty percent of the work **was** done by only five employees.
4. One-half of the beer at the party **was** warm.

For percentages (i.e. 40%) and fractions (i.e. 4/5), analyze the noun that follows the verb. In sentences number one and two, the nouns *students* and *spectators* are plural, so the plural verbs **speak** and **are** cheering are used. However, the nouns in sentences three and four, *work* and *beer* are both non-count singular, so we use the singular verb **was** in both sentences.

4. *Blocks of money, distance, and time*

Many times these blocks are considered **singular**.

Fifty dollars is a lot to pay for one dinner.
Five hundred miles is probably too far to drive in one day.
Forty-five minutes is a very long coffee break.

5. *Special Nouns*

Some nouns are tricky. Study the following list and memorize the rule.

Mathematics, statistics, economics, physics, aerobics

Some academic subjects end in –s, but they are singular anyway.
Mathematics **is** the most difficult subject for me. *Physics* **is** the easiest.

Advice, news, and hair [on your head] are non-count singular

Her *advice* **was** perfect for the situation.
The *news* **is** always bad because of the war.
Karl's *hair* is long and black.

Police is plural. An individual (singular) is a *police officer*

The *police* **are** coming right away.
A *police officer* sometimes **works** nights and weekends.

6. *Special Construction: One of the (plural noun) + singular verb.*

In this structure, remember to use a singular verb because the subject is *One*.

One of the **people** in the class **comes** from Vietnam.
One of the **cars** in the garage **is** thirty years old.
One of Matilda's **brothers** **is** a professional soccer player.

Exercise 1:

Subject and verb agreement: Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.

1. Most of the workers in that company (comes , come) from the Chicago area.
2. Shara (has , have) six brothers.
3. My brother and I (spends , spend) a lot of money.
4. The team (is , are) very good.
5. Two hours (is , are) the perfect length for a movie.
6. Mr. Izaguerra and his sister (come , comes) from Venezuela.
7. My mother’s advice (is , are) usually old-fashioned.
8. Six people (lives , live) in that small house.
9. Mathematics (is , are) very difficult for people with math phobia.
10. The police (makes , make) many arrests on Saturday nights.

Exercise 2:

Subject and verb agreement: Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.

1. Six miles (is , are) a long way to walk to school.
2. Louisa (has , have) two jobs.
3. Giovanni and Maria (has , have) a small apartment and three dogs.
4. The group (is , are) very large.
5. The jacket and the gloves (is , are) on the table.
6. Mr. Izaguerra (arrive , arrives) at work early every day.
7. The beer (is , are) very good.
8. Nine hundred dollars (is , are) a very high rent for that old building.
9. Mr. Iwasaki (dance , dances) very well.
10. Fifty percent of the book (is , are) about the Vice-President.

Exercise 3:

Subject and verb agreement: Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.

1. Every student in the class (speak , speaks) a different language.
2. One of my favorite meals (is , are) chicken and rice.
3. Three fourths of the flowers in the garden (is , are) roses.
4. A lot of the information in that article (is , are) wrong.
5. The police officer with the dark eyes (is , are) always in front of school.
6. Six blocks (is , are) too short to take a cab.
7. Marta (has , have) four brothers and three sisters.
8. The news on Channel 7 (is , are) always bad on the weekends.
9. One of the children (is , are) sick today.
10. Ms. Jackson’s advice (is , are) always good.

Exercise 4:

Error Correction. Correct the mistakes in the following sentences.

1. John work to much.

2. My sister never have time talk to me.

3. Sixteen miles take twenty minutes on the highway.

4. She never cry when she have an argument with she boyfriend.

5. His sisters comes home very late at night.

6. One of my friend are from India.

7. Her hair are long and blond.

8. The cheese are from Vermont.

9. My brother and my sister lives in big house.

10. Sixteen people in the class is from Asia.

Exercise 5:

Error Correction. Correct the mistakes in the following sentences.

1. He always go church Sunday.

2. In morning, Inez drink two cup coffee.

3. The professors at this college is nice, but they gives too many homeworks.

4. Physics are fascinating, but economics are too difficult for me.

5. Professor Marrocco and her brother does not talk to each other.

6. One of the my teacher are sick now.

7. Every day are different and wonderful.

8. The police is coming right now.

9. The police is coming right now.

10. In the hot summer, ten miles are too long to run.

Exercise 6:

Complete the following sentences. Insert a verb and any other words necessary to make a complete sentence. Make sure that the subject and verb are in agreement.

1. Two hours _____
2. A firefighter _____
3. One of my best friends _____
4. Larissa and José _____
5. The counselor's advice _____
6. The news from northern Africa _____
7. Mathematics _____
8. Every student in the class _____
9. Sixty percent of the people in the country _____
10. One half of the wine _____

Exercise 7:

Complete the following sentences. Insert a verb and any other words necessary to make a complete sentence. Make sure that the subject and verb are in agreement.

1. Isabella's hair _____
2. A lot of students _____
3. Many lawyers _____
4. Forty-two professors _____
5. Two hundred dollars _____
6. All of the students _____
7. A lot of the words in Chapter 2 _____
8. Every person I know _____
9. Twenty-five percent of the book _____
10. A lot of the cheese in the refrigerator _____

Exercise 8:

Subject and verb agreement with quantity expressions. Circle the correct form of the verb "to be" in parentheses.

1. Almost all of the air near the factory (is , are) polluted.
2. Some of the Louisa's friends (has , have) cars.
3. Most of the teachers (takes , take) the bus to school.
4. Most of my brother's mail (comes , come) in the late afternoon.
5. Half of the boxes (is , are) full.
6. One third of the program (is , are) about the war.
7. Sixty percent of the books (is , are) in Spanish.
8. Many of the animals in the zoo (is , are) wild.
9. All of the windows (is , are) closed at night.
10. Some of the TV programs (is , are) very interesting.

Exercise 9:

Subject and verb agreement with quantity expressions. Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.

1. A lot of the words in Chapter 6 (is , are) new.
2. Some of the vocabulary in the lesson (is , are) difficult.
3. I saw one movie. Most of the movie (takes , take) place in China.
4. Most of the people I know (comes , come) from Europe.
5. Half of the book (is , are) about soccer.
6. Two thirds of the test (is , are) about Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.
7. Forty percent of the teams (plays , play) their games at night.
8. All of my money (is , are) in my purse.
9. One of my friends (work , works) at the mall.
10. Some of the newscasters on Channel 47 (is , are) vey young.

Exercise 10:

Subject and verb agreement with quantity expressions. Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.

1. A lot of the coaches in the tournament (was , were) from Asia.
2. Seventeen people (was , were) rescued from the water.
3. The police (was , were) called immediately after the accident.
4. Mathematics (was , were) my best subject in school.
5. Nan and Joe (was , were) married for six years.
6. The news from India (was , were) about the Cricket World Cup.
7. Some of the singers on the program (was , were) very nervous.
8. Every student in the class (was , were) on time for the examination.
9. One of my friends (was , were) hired for the job.
10. All of the cities in northern California (was , were) affected by the rain.

Answer Key

Exercise 1: Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.

1. Most of the workers in that company (**come**) from the Chicago area.
2. Shara (**has**) six brothers.
3. My brother and I (**spend**) a lot of money.
4. The team (**is**) very good.
5. Two hours (**is**) the perfect length for a movie.
6. Mr. Izaguerre and his sister (**come**) from Venezuela.
7. My mother’s advice (**is**) usually old-fashioned.
8. Six people (**live**) in that small house.
9. Mathematics (**is**) very difficult for people with math phobia.
10. The police (**make**) many arrests on Saturday night.

Exercise 2: Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.

1. Six miles (**is**) a long way to walk to school.
2. Louisa (**has**) two jobs.
3. Giovanni and Maria (**have**) a small apartment and three dogs.
4. The group (**is**) very large.
5. The jacket and the gloves (**are**) on the table.
6. Mr. Izaguerre (**arrives**) at work early every day.
7. That beer (**is**) very good.
8. Nine hundred dollars (**is**) a very high rent for that old building.
9. Mr. Iwasaki (**dances**) very well.
10. Fifty percent of the book (**is**) about the Vice-President.

Exercise 3: Circle the correct form of the verb “to be” in parentheses.

1. Every student in the class (**speaks**) a different language.
2. One of my favorite meals (**is**) chicken and rice.
3. Three fourths of the flowers in the garden (**are**) roses.
4. A lot of the information in that article (**is**) wrong.
5. The police officer with the dark eyes (**is**) always in front of school.
6. Six blocks (**is**) too short to take a cab.
7. Marta (**has**) four brothers and three sisters.
8. The news on Channel 7 (**is**) always bad on the weekends.
9. One of the children (**is**) sick today.
10. Ms. Jackson’s advice (**is**) always good.

Exercise 4: Correct the mistakes in the following sentences.

1. John works too much.
2. My sister never has time to talk to me.
3. Sixteen miles takes twenty minutes on the highway.
4. She never cries when she has an argument with her boyfriend.
5. His sisters come home very late at night.
6. One of my friends is from India.
7. Her hair is long and blond.
8. The cheese is from Vermont.
9. My brother and my sister lives in big house.
10. Sixteen people in the class are from Asia.

Exercise 5: Correct the mistakes in the following sentences.

1. He always goes to church on Sunday.
2. In the morning, Inez drinks two cups of coffee.
3. The professors at this college are nice, but they give too much homework
4. Physics is fascinating, but economics is too difficult for me.
5. Professor Marrocco and her brother do not talk to each other.
6. One of my teachers is sick now.
7. Every day is different and wonderful.
8. The police are coming right now.
9. My mother’s advice is old-fashioned.
10. In the hot summer, ten miles is too long to run.

Exercise 6: Insert a verb and any other words necessary to make a complete sentence. (Answers will vary.)

1. Two hours [**is a long time to watch television.**]
2. A firefighter [**always stays awake when he works.**]
3. One of my best friends [**is from Russia.**]
4. Larissa and José [**are best friends.**]
5. The counselor's advice [**is excellent**]
6. The news from northern Africa [**is not very good today.**]
7. Mathematics [**is my first class of the day.**]
8. Every student in the class [**has a book.**]
9. Sixty percent of the people in the country [**work in the oil business.**]
10. One half of the wine [**is from Italy.**]

Exercise 7: Insert a verb and any other words necessary to make a complete sentence. (Answers will vary.)

1. Isabella's hair [**is long and curly.**]
2. A lot of students [**are studying for the examination.**]
3. Many lawyers [**have jobs with the government.**]
4. Forty-two professors [**are leaving for Asia next week.**]
5. Two hundred dollars [**is too much for a pair of shoes.**]
6. All of the students [**are nervous about the test.**]
7. A lot of the words in Chapter 2 [**are difficult.**]
8. Every person I know [**is from a foreign country.**]
9. Twenty-five percent of the book [**is about World War II.**]
10. A lot of the cheese in the refrigerator [**is from England.**]

Exercise 8: Circle the correct form of the verb "to be" in parentheses.

1. Almost all of the air near the factory (**is**) polluted.
2. Some of the Louisa's friends (**have**) cars.
3. Most of the teachers (**take**) the bus to school.
4. Most of my brother's mail (**comes**) in the late afternoon.
5. Half of the boxes (**are**) full.
6. One third of the program (**is**) about the war.
7. Sixty percent of the books (**are**) in Spanish.
8. Many of the animals in the zoo (**are**) wild.
9. All of the windows (**are**) closed at night.
10. Some of the tv programs (**are**) very interesting.

Exercise 9: Circle the correct form of the verb "to be" in parentheses.

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7. Forty percent of the teams (**play**) their games at night.
8. All of my money (**is**) in my purse.
9. One of my friends (**works**) at the mall.
1. Some of the newscasters on Channel 47 (**are**) very young.

Exercise 10: Circle the correct form of the verb "to be" in parentheses.

1. A lot of the coaches in the tournament (**were**) from Asia.
2. Seventeen people (**were**) rescued from the water.
3. The police (**were**) called immediately after the accident.
4. Mathematics (**was**) my best subject in school.
5. Nan and Joe (**were**) married for six years.
6. The news from India (**was**) about the Cricket World Cup.
7. Some of the singers on the program (**were**) very nervous.
8. Every student in the class (**was**) on time for the examination.
9. One of my friends (**was**) hired for the job.
10. All of the cities in northern California (**were**) affected by the rain.