



1.3. Grammar Clinic_Part 1 - Subject Verb Agreement

Look at the following sentences. Can you identify any errors?

- Janaki don't look happy.
- Michael sing well.
- These shoes doesn't fit me.
- I doesn't drive.
- Everyone are here.

Well, what do you think? I'm sure you have identified the errors. Check the Answers below.

Answers

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Janaki don't look happy. | - Janaki doesn't look happy. |
| • Michael sing well. | - Michael sings well. |
| • These shoes doesn't fit me. | - These shoes don't fit me. |
| • I doesn't drive. | - I don't drive. |
| • Everyone are here. | - Everyone is here. |

Hi again. We may have a problem here. I just did an X-Ray on you. There seems to be a hairline fracture in the bone that holds your language structure up – the Subject - Verb bone! But don't worry; Vinita will help you tackle it.



Thank you Vikas. Your report is useful. I think I will take my friend here through a few rules of grammar.



We mentioned a little while ago that any sentence would have a subject and a verb. But these two need to agree with each other. This is what we mean by “subject - verb agreement”. The errors we noticed in the sentences above exist because the subject and verb do not agree with each other. Let's take a look at this in detail.

Subject Verb Agreement- The Rules

A singular subject takes a singular verb.

A plural subject takes a plural verb.

For example:

- The apple is green. (Third person singular)
- Apples are good for health. (Third person plural)

The verb takes an 's' in the third person singular

For example:

- The boy sings very well.
- Mary likes ice cream.

Indefinite pronouns such as everyone and everybody feel plural to some writers, but they are always singular — and take a singular verb.

For example:

- Everyone associated with this project is proud to be here.
- Everybody wants to go to the beach.

Don't be confused by phrases that come between the subject pronoun and its verb — phrases that may contain plural words.

For example:

- One of the boxes is open.
- The price of the books is very high.
- Priya, who played the role of the teacher in the drama, is the best actor.

With fractional expressions (fractions or decimal equivalents), the verb will be determined by what is being measured: is it COUNTABLE or not.

For example:

- Two-fifths of the grain is ruined.
- One-half of the employees were happy to know about the celebrations.
- Of all the gifts we have counted so far, fifty are wrapped.

Phrases such as together with, along with, and as well as seem to join subjects, but they do not work the same as and. They are not conjunctions.

For example:

- A majority of the student body is in favor of asking the Dean to stay another year.
- Some of the equipment in the store, as well as some pieces of furniture was ruined in the flood.

- The third year students, together with their teacher, are going to the science exhibition.

When either and neither appear as the subject alone, they are singular. This is true even though the subject seems to be two things.

For example:

- Neither of these tables appears to be suitable.
- The travel agent will lend me a train ticket or a flight ticket. Either is fine with me.

When either and neither act as correlative conjunctions, the subject that is closer to the verb determines the number (singular or plural form) of the verb.

For example:

- Neither the professor nor the assistants are at fault.
- Either the assistants or the professor has to be responsible for the year-end festival.

When an expletive construction (there is, there are, here is, etc.) begins a sentence, the subject (which determines the number of the verb) comes after the verb.

For example:

- There are several reasons for the breakout of the epidemic.
- Here is the list of things you need to buy for your class project.

Certain words like trousers, stairs, premises, police, staff etc, are always considered plural and take a plural verb.

For example:

- The police have issued a warrant for Chopra's arrest.
- The premises are located away from the city.

Certain words like bacon and eggs, fish and chips, research and development are considered singular as they have a close association.

For example:

- Research and development is an integral part of this organisation.
- Bread and butter is my favourite breakfast.
- Learning and sharing is one of TCS' values.

The rules of grammar may seem easy when you read through them. However it is only through constant practice that you can master them. Try out the quiz given below and let's see if we have been able to take care of that hairline fracture. Also, at the end of our trip through

Grammar Clinic, you will be given a list of websites that will help you learn more about grammar. Go through them as well and help yourself improve on the foundation of your language!