

Subject-Verb Agreement

Notice the difference between these two sentences:

The class begins tomorrow.
The classes begin tomorrow.

In the first sentence, the subject class is singular. The verb begins is singular also.

In the second sentence, the subject classes is plural; likewise, the verb begin is plural.

When the subject and verb are both either singular or plural they are said to agree

1. Incorrect: The car cost too much money.
 Correct: The car costs too much money.

2. Incorrect: The trains stops at Mardeeville.
 Correct: The trains stop at Mardeeville.

Part I

Exercises: Circle the verb that correctly completes the sentence. Decide whether or not the subject is singular or plural, and then choose the verb that agrees with it.

1. Subject-verb agreement errors (is, are) a problem for many students.
2. The bank (opens, open) at nine o'clock in the morning.
3. Denise (speaks, speak) three languages.
4. The boys (rides, ride) the bus to school every day.
5. The family (eats, eat) dinner at twelve on Sundays.
6. The animals at the zoo (was, were) very strange.
7. All the teachers (comes, come) to school before seven.
8. The team (plays, play) soccer five days a week.
9. The old man (walks, walk) five miles every day.
10. The people at the game always (yells, yell) at the umpire.
11. Cotton sheets (feel, feels) softer than polyester ones.
12. Sticks of gum always (feel, feels) powdery on your tongue.

13. Lettuce in most of the stores (cost, costs) almost three dollars a head.
14. All the cars on my block (has, have) to be moved one day a month for street cleaning.
15. The rust spots on the back of the car (need, needs) to be cleaned.
16. There (were, was) too many people in the room.
17. The decisions of the judge (seem, seems) questionable.
18. That silk flower by the candle (look, looks) real.
19. The tomatoes in this salad (is, are) brown and mushy.
20. Nell, with her three dogs close behind, (run, runs) around the park every day.

Part II

Exercises: Circle the subject that correctly completes the sentence. Decide whether or not the verb is singular or plural and then choose the subject that agrees with it.

1. The (book, books) was due yesterday.
2. Her (brother, brothers) hate spinach.
3. The (tooth, teeth) needs to be pulled out.
4. The (book, books) costs twenty-five dollars.
5. The (student, students) ride the bus home every night.
6. The (exam, exams) is worth fifty points.
7. The (man, men) go to work at six o'clock in the morning.
8. The (house, houses) are too close together.
9. Which (child, children) has a cold?
10. His (foot, feet) are always cold.

Answers: Part I

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|-----------|-----------|
| 1. are | 11. feel |
| 2. opens | 12. feel |
| 3. speaks | 13. costs |
| 4. ride | 14. have |
| 5. eats | 15. need |
| 6. were | 16. were |
| 7. come | 17. seem |
| 8. plays | 18. looks |
| 9. walks | 19. are |
| 10. yell | 20. runs |

Answers: Part II

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| 1. book | 6. exam |
| 2. brothers | 7. men |
| 3. tooth | 8. houses |
| 4. book | 9. child |
| 5. students | 10. feet |

