

Verifying Verb Agreement: Part 2

Verbs must agree with their subjects. However, the correct decision is often unclear. The guidelines below explain three tricky subject-verb agreement rules.

Rule 1. When a subject is joined by *or* or *nor*, it can require a singular or a plural verb. The verb must agree with the closer subject.

Example: Neither the memos nor the report is ready. (The singular verb *is* agrees with *report*, the closer of the two subjects.)

Rule 2. Collective nouns may take singular or plural verbs, depending on whether the members of the group are operating as a unit or individually.

Example: Our management team is in sync about its diversity goals. (The team is acting as a unit.)

Example: The jury are unable to come to a verdict. (The individuals of the jury are not acting as a unit.)

Rule 3. A verb agrees with its subject regardless of prepositional phrases that may intervene, including the phrases *as well as*, *in addition to*, *such as*, *including*, *together with*, and similar expressions.

Example: The list of the executives' goals is extensive. (The singular verb *is* agrees with the singular subject *list*.)

Example: The CEO, in addition to several other leaders, approves of the proposal. (The singular verb *approves* agrees with the singular subject *CEO*.)

Your task. Underline the subjects in the following sentences and highlight the correct verb to match. Then identify the rule that applies.

1. The applicant, as well as the hiring managers, was/were pleased with the interview.
2. Neither the driver nor the passengers was/were injured in the crash.
3. The committee was/were arguing over the new dress code.
4. The entire orchestra was/were tuning instruments before the performance began.
5. The assistants or the office manager check/checks the toner weekly.
6. The fleet was/were anchored in the channel.
7. The personnel director, in addition to members of the department, is/are conducting the second interview.
8. Analysis of the results reveal/reveals a significant difference between groups.
9. The list of attendees is/are used to assign groups.
10. The team is/are painting a mural for a community clean-up.
11. However, the team disagrees/disagree over which type of paint to use.
12. Neither Enrique nor I has/have finished our section of the slide deck.