

Compound Subjects and Verb Agreement

A **compound subject** refers to two or more subjects that share the same verb. They are joined by conjunctions such as *and*, *or*, *nor*, (text pg. 522)

When subjects are compound, follow these rules:

1. When a compound subject is connected by *and*, the verb that follows is usually plural.

Yellow *and* red are my favorite colors. (plural verb *are*)

Trucks *and* tractors (on the road) slow traffic down. (plural verb *slow*)

There is an exception to this rule: If the parts of the compound subject are thought of as one person or thing, the subject is singular and takes a singular verb.

Example: The school's macaroni and cheese is delicious.

(mac and cheese is considered one food and takes the singular verb *is*)

2. When a compound subject is connected with *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject closest to it.

A car *or* a train provides good transportation.

The singular subject *train* is closest to the verb, so use the singular verb *provides*.

Neither children *nor* adults like to wait in long lines.

The plural subject *adults* is closest to the verb, so use the plural verb *like*.

Either the members *or* the leader presents the speech at the meetings.

The singular subject *leader* is closest to the verb, so use the singular verb *presents*.

Let's practice:

1. The trees^Pand shrubs (look, looks) nice today.
2. Tigers^Por lions (live, lives) ~~at the zoo~~.
3. Either chicken^Sor steak (taste, tastes) good when barbequed.

Your turn! In each of the following sentences,

- 1) Draw a line through prepositional phrases.
- 2) Put a box around the conjunction in the compound subject. Underline ht subjects once.
- 3) If the conjunction is *and*, write a **P** above it to show that the subject is plural.
- 4) If the conjunction is *or* or *nor*, find the subject closest to the verb and label it **S** for singular or **P** for plural.
- 5) Underline twice the italicized verb in parentheses that agrees with the compound subject.

EXAMPLE 1. A sandwich and a note from Mom (*was, were*) ~~on the table~~.

1. Corn, beans, and rice (*is, are*) staple food items in many cultures.
2. The chess club or the band members (*run, runs*) the dunking booth at the school carnival.
3. Ray and Ted (*was, were*) elected to the committee.
4. Glue or tape (*is, are*) acceptable on these packages.
5. My friends and I (*like, likes*) the new classroom.
6. Only towels and soap (*belong, belongs*) in the linen closet.
7. Dust or water (*has, have*) ruined these disks.
8. Neither Hans nor his sisters (*was, were*) playing that day.
9. My book report and our compositions on astronomy (*are, is*) due this week.
10. Either moles or a rabbit (*make, makes*) these holes in the yard.
11. Your paints and brushes (*is, are*) still on the kitchen table.
12. Neither the lights in the kitchen nor the microwave (*work, works*).
13. Both tennis and golf (*require, requires*) a great deal of concentration.
14. The time and place for the car wash (*has, have*) not been announced yet.
15. Spaghetti and meatballs (*is, are*) my favorite dinner.

Writing: Underline the subjects once and underline the verb twice in the sentences you create.

1. Write a sentence with a compound subject joined by *and*.

2. Write a sentence with a compound subject joined by *or*.

3. Write a sentence with a compound subject joined by *nor*.
