

UTS:

HELPS

HIGHER EDUCATION LANGUAGE AND PRESENTATION SUPPORT

Grammar Review 1: Parts of Speech & Subject-verb Agreement

Grammar review workshops

1. Parts of speech & subject-verb agreement
2. Verbs & reporting verbs
3. Articles & punctuation
4. Your suggestions

Parts of speech

Words must be used in their correct form according to what they are doing in the sentence. Every word in a sentence has a function or role. Misrepresenting the function or role of a word in a sentence can lead to misunderstanding.

Joseph is bored versus Joseph is boring

Joseph is interesting versus Joseph is interested

A word being used as a **subject** or **object** must be in **noun** form:

The company's decision has to be respected.

We have to respect the company's decision.

The company needs to make a decision.

The company has to decide.

The company has decided.

The company is deciding between the two.

A word being used to **describe a noun** must be in **adjective** form:

New employees are given a corporate uniform.

The corporation insists that all its employees must wear their uniforms.

Critical analysis has to be exercised.

The critics did not like the film.

A word being used to **qualify a verb** must be in **adverb** form:

The statement must be analysed critically.

The critical statement must be analysed.

Careful analysis must be carried out.

Analysis must be carried out carefully.

Parts of speech: Activity 1

Analyse the following sentences. Identify the words in each sentence that belong to the same family, and the functions of these words.

These managers differ; one difference between these different managers is that they manage differently.

This is a productive company; it produces many products productively and has increased productivity in its production.

In the national interest, the nation will nationalise nationally.

Parts of speech: Activity 2

With each group of words below, form a sentence:

patient, patience, patiently

lead, leading, leader, leadership

strong, strongly, strength, strengthen

organise, organised, organiser, organisation, organisational, organisationally

Subject-verb agreement

Subject-verb agreement refers to the way words or word classes are matched in terms of number. I.e. singular noun-singular verb; plural noun-plural verb.

Joseph is a gorgeous person!

There are two Josephs in my class, and they are both gorgeous!

In order to determine if a singular verb or plural verb should be used to match the noun, it helps to know if it's a countable noun or uncountable noun.

Countable and uncountable nouns

Countable and uncountable nouns:

- A countable noun is one that can be expressed in plural form (e.g. essay/essays).
- An uncountable noun is one that usually cannot be expressed in a plural form (e.g. coffee).

Some nouns in English belong to both classes: they have both a countable (i.e. concrete and specific) and uncountable (i.e. abstract and general) meaning:

I've had some **difficulties** finding relevant materials for the essay.
She succeeded at university with little **difficulty**.

The **talks** will take place in Building 1.
I dislike idle **talk**.

A special case of the use of uncountable nouns in a countable sense has to do with classification. Sometimes a usually uncountable noun can be understood as one item separate and distinct from other items of the same category. The nouns that function this way often denote foods and beverages.

There are several Australian **wines** to choose from.

I prefer Sumatran **coffees** to Columbian.

We use a variety of different **batters** in our bakery.

There is/are...

In sentences beginning with *There is* or *There are*, the subject follows the verb, which agrees with what follows:

There *are* **many questions**.

There *is* **a question**.

Collective nouns

Collective nouns are words that imply more than one person, but that are considered singular as they refer to a unit/group and take a singular verb:

The team *runs* during practice.

The committee *decides* how to proceed.

The family *has* a long history.

Collective nouns take a plural verb when the noun is referring to individuals within the group:

The government *has* made an important decision.

The government *have* made an important decision.

The class *has* a test on Friday.

The class *have* a test on Friday.

Nouns ending in 's'

Nouns such as *mathematics*, *news*, *measles*, and *physics* (plural in form but singular in meaning) require singular verbs:

The news *is* on at 6 o'clock.

Nouns such as *scissors*, *tweezers*, *trousers*, *spectacles* and *chopsticks* (plural in form and plural in meaning) require plural verbs:

These scissors *are* dull.

Those trousers *are* made of wool.

***A pair of trousers** *is* torn.

Indefinite pronouns

The words *each*, *each one*, *either*, *neither*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *anybody*, *anyone*, *nobody*, *somebody*, *someone*, and *no-one* are singular and require a singular verb:

Nobody *has* claimed responsibility.

***Everybody** *has to pay* their taxes.

***Any** of the recommended books *are* worth reading.

Compound subjects

When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns (making them joint operators of the action) connected by *and*, use a plural verb:

John and I *work* on the assignment together.

***Bacon and eggs** *is* on the menu.

When two or more singular nouns are connected by *or* or *nor*, use a singular verb:

The book *or* the pen *is* in the drawer.

When a subject contains a singular noun and a plural noun joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is nearer the verb:

The boy *or* his friends *run* every day.

His friends *or* the boy *runs* every day.

Do not be misled by a phrase (i.e. post-modifier) that comes between the subject and the verb. The verb agrees with the subject (head noun):

One of the boxes *is* open.

The team captain, as well as his players, *is* anxious.

The book, including all the chapters in the first section, *is* boring.

The woman with all the dogs *walks* down my street.

Complex subjects

A noun phrase can have two or more nouns within it. The verb that follows will agree with the head noun:

A book of answers *comes* with the study guide.

An amount, quantity or number thought of as a whole takes a singular verb:

Six years *is* a long time.

Three dollars *is* not much.

Ten kilometres *is* too far to walk.

The number of students on the course *is* less than last year.

Expressions using the phrase *number/total of* depend on the meaning of the phrase: they take on a singular verb when referring to a singular quantity (i.e. a set), and plural verbs to highlight the individuals in it:

A number of **students** *do* not understand the assignment question.

A total of 88 **students** *is* coming.

With fractions, percentages and indefinite quantifiers (*all, few, many, much, some, etc.*), the verb agrees with the preceding noun:

Two-thirds of the **task** *is* completed.

Two-thirds of his **articles** *are* peer-reviewed.

Fifty percent of **what he writes** *is* undocumented.

Fifty percent of the **computers** *are* iMacs.

All the **information** *is* correct.

All the **studies** *are* current.

Much of the **book** *seems* relevant to this assignment.

Many **researchers** *depend* on grants from industry.

None and *half of* can take a singular or a plural verb, depending on whether the following noun is countable:

None of the mixture *is* left.

None of the ingredients *are* left.

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