Subject – Verb Agreement

Singular means one. Plural means more than one.

If you have three brand new cars, and five excited drivers, will these numbers “agree”? No, probably not, two of the drivers will be “careless”.

Subject-verb agreement works on the same principle. The “number” of the subject must “agree” with the “number” of the verb.

- A dog runs.
- A cat sleeps.
- The men run.
- The children play.
- Several ducks swim.

Most plural subjects end in “s” or “es”. (Of course, there are a few exceptions, for example: deer, or sheep.)

The “plural” difference between subjects and verbs:
- Adding an “s” to a noun will make it plural.
  - Boy – Boys
- Adding an “s” to a verb will make it singular.
  - Boy runs.
  - Boys run.

(Keep in mind that there are exceptions to this rule, of course.)

If you can, memorize these shortcuts (when you are using the present tense of a verb.)
- I, You, We, & They ALWAYS use the plural form of the verb.
  - (no “s” on the end of the verb)
- He, She, & It ALWAYS use the singular form of the verb.
  - (add an “s” on to the end of the word)

Three verbs which can be very confusing:

- Be: I am, you are, he/she/it is, we/they/you are
- Have: I/you/we/they have, he/she/it has
- Do: I/you/we/they do, he/she/it does

A special note about do and does. Use of negative contractions:
- Don’t and doesn’t can be very tricky if you don’t remember what each stands for:
  - Don’t is the contraction for do not.
  - Doesn’t is the contraction for does not.
When in doubt, "undo" the contraction and read it out loud in your sentence. Remember to watch for the "agreement" with the subject.

Incorrect use: She don't have any money.
Separation: She "do not" have any money.
Correction: She doesn't have any money.
Separation: She does not have any money.

Finding the right subject is always helpful. A couple of tricks:
"Cross out" the prepositional phrases. Familiarize yourself with the list of prepositions. Remember that a prepositional phrase starts with a preposition and ends with a noun. It will never be a part of the subject (or the verb, for that matter).

There and Here: There are never a subject or a verb. Honest. A couple of catch phrases to help you remember:

Here just means it's near.
There just tells me where. (As in, it's over there!)

These two words just tell your reader where something is.

There are three of my best friends.
Here is a sample of my work.

In "here" and "there" sentences the verb will come before the subject.

Numbers: Look for numbers when defining the subject.

One of my friends is here.

If you are having trouble finding the preposition, ask yourself, "How many of my friends are here?" Only one.

Collective Nouns: You may have to memorize these if you can't remember that each is just one "group", a single entity; one, single collection of things.

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