Subject-Verb Agreement

A sentence is made up of a subject and a verb. The subject and the verb in a sentence must agree. So what does that mean?

Subjects can be singular (only one) or plural (more than one). Likewise verbs have a singular or plural form. If a subject of a sentence is singular, then the verb must also be in the singular form. Here is an example:

- Mary loves coffee.

The subject, “Mary,” is singular. (In this sentence there is only one Mary.) The verb, “loves,” is also in the singular form. Here’s another example:

- The tutors love coffee.

The subject of this sentence, “tutors,” is plural. (There is more then one tutor.) Therefore, the verb, “love,” is also in plural form.

Think Opposites

- To write a subject in the plural form, we often add an “s” to the end of the word: cats, dogs, rabbits.

- To write a verb in the plural form, we usually do the opposite and take off the “s”: Cats run. Dogs bite. Rabbits hop.

- If a subject is singular, we usually do not add an “s” to the end of the word: the cat, the dog, the rabbit.

- On the other hand, to write a verb in the singular form we again do the opposite and add an “s”: The cat runs. The dog bites. The rabbit hops.

Here are a few more tips:

- When a sentence has two or more subjects joined by “and” use the plural form of the verb.

  Mary and Linda like strong coffee. Carmen and Sydney drink cokes.

- When the subject of a sentence is a collective noun, (a noun that stands for a group, like team, or crowd) use the singular form of the verb.

  The team wins every game it plays. The crowd claps wildly.
Practice

Choose the correct verb for each sentence.

1. Each year, local runners ________ themselves for the annual race.
   a. prepare b. prepares

2. Several companies in the area ________ similar races each year.
   a. sponsor b. sponsors

3. Last year, one of the local races ________ cancelled.
   a. was b. were

4. I hope the U.S. ski team ________.
   a. win b. wins

5. Charlene, along with her two sisters, ________ every morning before school to get ready for the race.
   a. run b. runs

6. Carl and Theresa ________ expected to finish in the top 10.
   a. is b. are

7. The community ________ outraged by the noisy construction.
   a. is b. are

8. The race course, which winds through the picturesque back road, ________ great demands on the runners’ skills.
   a. place b. places

9. The officials at the finish line, who ________ each runner’s time, check their stopwatches.
   a. record b. records

10. Either Jean or Pat ________ favored to win the race.
    a. is b. are

11. The committee ________ if we get raises.
    a. decide b. decides