

## Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to non-specific people or things. When an indefinite pronoun is used as the subject of a sentence, it, like any other subject, needs to agree with its corresponding verb. Some pronouns require singular verbs (**everyone, each**); some require plural verbs (**both, many**). Other indefinite pronouns can be either singular or plural.

### Singular Indefinite Pronouns

A singular verb is required when any word in the table below is used as a subject or as an adjective. Even though most of these indefinite pronouns seem to have plural meanings, treat them as singular subjects.

| Singular Indefinite Pronouns   |               |                |                   |
|--|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| The words in the chart below are always singular and require singular verbs. |               |                |                   |
| “-ONE” words   | “-BODY” words | “-THING” words | Other             |
| One  | -             | -              | each              |
| anyone   | anybody       | anything       | every             |
| everyone   | everybody     | everything     | either            |
| no one   | no body       | nothing        | neither           |
| someone  | somebody      | something      | another           |
| any one  | -             | -              | much              |
| every one  | -             | -              | none              |
| some one   | -             | -              | many a or many an |

### Each ...

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| <b>Each</b> physicist, chemist, and biologist <b>is</b> highly intelligent. |                 |
| <b>Subject:</b> each  | <b>Verb:</b> is |

Since all compound subjects with **each** and **every** take **singular verbs**, the singular verb **is** is required for this sentence.

### Plural Indefinite Pronouns

Just as there are indefinite pronouns that are always singular, there also are plural indefinite pronouns.

| Plural Indefinite Pronouns  |            |             |               |                |
|---|------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| All of the words in the chart below are <b>plural</b> and require <b>plural verbs</b> . |            |             |               |                |
| <b>both</b>   | <b>few</b> | <b>many</b> | <b>others</b> | <b>several</b> |

### Both ...

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| <b>Both</b> of us should <b>decide</b> what our weekend plans are. |                     |
| <b>Subject:</b> Both   | <b>Verb:</b> decide |

In this example, the plural subject is **both** and a **plural verb** is chosen to agree with this subject.

### Singular or Plural Indefinite Pronouns

There are also some unique indefinite pronouns that can be singular or plural, depending on the noun they refer to. The noun can usually be found in a phrase beginning with **of**. All of the words in the table below can be singular or plural indefinite pronouns.

| Singular or Plural Indefinite Pronouns  |             |            |             |             |             |
|---|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Depending on their meaning, all of the words in the chart below can be either <b>singular or plural</b> and require <b>singular or plural verbs</b> . |             |            |             |             |             |
| <b>all</b>  | <b>none</b> | <b>any</b> | <b>some</b> | <b>more</b> | <b>most</b> |

### Singular Subject All

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| <b>All</b> of the jewelry <b>is</b> made of genuine gold and silver. |                 |
| <b>Subject:</b> all  | <b>Verb:</b> is |

In this example, **all** (meaning all of the jewelry) is a singular subject and therefore needs the singular verb **is** to agree with its subject.

### Plural Subject All

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| <b>All</b> of the rings and necklaces <b>are</b> made of genuine gold and silver. |                  |
| <b>Subject:</b> all   | <b>Verb:</b> are |

In this example, **all** (meaning all of the rings and necklaces) is a plural subject and therefore needs the plural verb **are** to agree with its subject.

### Exercise 1: Indefinite Pronouns

First, determine whether the indefinite pronoun subject in each sentence is singular (S) or plural (P). Complete each sentence with a verb that agrees with the given subject.

1. ( **S** ) **Each** flavour of ice cream **tastes** delicious.
2. ( ) Everybody on the ski hill \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ( ) Much of the money \_\_\_\_\_.
4. ( ) Anyone in the newspaper headlines \_\_\_\_\_.
5. ( ) Most of the strawberries \_\_\_\_\_.
6. ( ) Several students at Humber College \_\_\_\_\_.
7. ( ) No one who was invited to my birthday party \_\_\_\_\_.

## Nouns Ending in -s

Even though some nouns appear to be plural, they can actually be singular in meaning. **Note:** An –s ending on a noun does not automatically mean the noun is plural. Therefore, if a noun with an –s ending is singular, it will require a singular verb.

### Plural Word

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| <b>Mathematics is</b> an intriguing field to study since it is closely related to technology. |                 |
| <b>Subject:</b> mathematics   | <b>Verb:</b> is |

### Plural Name

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <b>The New York Times captures</b> all of the top news stories around the globe. |                       |
| <b>Subject:</b> The New York Times   | <b>Verb:</b> captures |

### Nouns ending in –s

Nouns which fall into this category can include those which **end in –ics, organizational names, geographic names and names of publications and products.** These words or names that are plural in form but singular in meaning take a singular verb.

### Exercise 2: Nouns Ending in –s

Determine which of the plural words and names are singular in meaning. Indicate whether the subject in each sentence is singular (S) or plural (P). Complete each sentence with a verb that agrees with the given subject.

1. ( **S** ) The **Solomon Islands produces** cocoa beans, coconuts, palm kernels and rice.
2. ( ) The Royal Botanical Gardens \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ( ) Trinidad and Tobago \_\_\_\_\_.
4. ( ) Kellogg’s \_\_\_\_\_.
5. ( ) Economics \_\_\_\_\_.
6. ( ) Mathematics and Business \_\_\_\_\_.

## Collective Nouns/Group Nouns

A collective noun is a word that is singular in form, but it consists of a group of persons, animals, or things.

### Collective/Group Nouns

Nouns which fall into this category include **army, audience, band, board, cabinet, class, committee, company, corporation, council, crowd, department, faculty, family, firm, group, jury, majority, minority, public, school, society, staff and team.**

# SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT –PART 3

The noun requires a singular verb when it refers to a group as a **whole unit**; however, the noun requires a plural verb when the group is being considered as **individual members**. In some situations, the collective noun can be treated as singular or plural. Use either a singular or plural verb to emphasize a group or a collection of individuals.

## Singular Whole Unit

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| The <b>jury provides</b> a verdict in record time. |                       |
| <b>Subject:</b> jury                               | <b>Verb:</b> provides |

In this example, the **jury** provides a verdict as a group. Thus, the subject of this sentence requires a singular verb.

## Plural as Individual Members

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| The <b>jury are</b> arguing amongst themselves. |                  |
| <b>Subject:</b> jury                            | <b>Verb:</b> are |

In this example, the members of the **jury** are acting separately as individuals. Thus, the subject of this sentence requires a plural verb.

## Singular or Plural

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| His <b>family is</b> going on a vacation to Switzerland. |                 |
| <b>Subject:</b> family                                   | <b>Verb:</b> is |

In this example, the members of the **family** are acting as a group. Thus, the subject of this sentence requires a singular verb.

## Singular or Plural

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| I hope Julie's <b>family are</b> well for the holidays. |                  |
| <b>Subject:</b> family                                  | <b>Verb:</b> are |

In this example, the members of the **family** are being considered separately as individuals. Thus, the subject of this sentence requires a plural verb. This sentence could also be rewritten: "I hope the members of Julie's family are well for the holidays." This sentence more clearly states that the speaker is talking about each individual member of Julie's family.

## Exercise 3: Collective Nouns

Determine whether the collective nouns are singular (S) or plural (P) in meaning. Complete each sentence with a verb that agrees with the given subject. The first question has been completed for you.

1. ( S ) The **company is** recruiting members for its management team.
2. ( ) The council \_\_\_\_\_ on the verdict of the case.
3. ( ) The staff \_\_\_\_\_ planning an intervention program.
4. ( ) Forty-two kilometers \_\_\_\_\_ the length of a full marathon.
5. ( ) My family \_\_\_\_\_ each allergic to peanuts.
6. ( ) The rock band \_\_\_\_\_ performing a magnificent concert.