

# Bracken Business Communications Clinic

## SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT: A NUMBERS THING

**If a subject is singular, its verb must be singular.**

**If a subject is plural, its verb must be plural.**

Examples: [Note: Subjects below are italicized; Verbs are bold and italicized.]

Singular:     *The Murphy family* **is** celebrating.     ***I am*** celebrating.  
                  *Stan or Sue* **is** celebrating.           Neither *Stan* nor *Sue* **is** celebrating.  
                  *One of the Murphys* **is** celebrating.     A *neighbor* **doesn't** like it.  
                  *The Murphy family, as well as their neighbors,* **is** awake.

Plural:       *The Murphys* **are** celebrating.        ***We are*** celebrating.  
                  *Stan and Sue Murphy* **are** celebrating.  
                  *All of the Murphys* **are** celebrating.     *The neighbors* **don't** like it.  
                  *The Murphy family and all of their neighbors* **are** awake.

**--When a compound subject contains both a singular and a plural noun/pronoun joined by or/nor, the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is nearer the verb.**

*His friends or the boy* **parties** every day. (singular)

*The boy or his friends* **party** every day. (plural)

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

*Each of those boys* **is** an athlete.

*Everybody* **knows** the Murphys.

**-- Collective nouns such as committee, group, and team, as well as some nouns such as civics, mathematics, and news require singular verbs:**

Her *team* **is** practicing.

*The news* **is** bad.

**--The word dollars is special. When talking about an amount of money, it requires a singular verb, but when referring to the dollars themselves, a plural verb is required.**

*Ten dollars* **is** affordable. (singular)

*Dollars* **are** acceptable. (plural)

**--Nouns with two or more parts (scissors, tweezers, pants, shoes) require plural verbs.**

*These scissors* **are** dull.

*Those pants* **are** short.

**--In sentences beginning with "there is" or "there are," the subject follows the verb. Since "there" is not the subject, the verb agrees with what follows.**

There **is** a question. (singular)

There **are** many questions. (plural)