

THE USE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE : THE RULES OF CONCORD

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Concord

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Genre : English Study

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Concord in the use of English language means agreement between the subject and the verb or agreement between a verb and other elements of clause structure.

In the use of concord in English language, there are many rules governing the topic. So let analyse the rules one by one.

Rule 1

Subject and verb concord

When the subject in a sentence is singular, the verb should also be singular.

For example,

She (singular subject) **goes** (singular verb), not: **She go** (plural verb). Also, when the subject is plural, the verb should also be plural.

The girls (plural subject) **go** (plural verb), not **The girls** (plural subject) **goes** (Singular verb).

Rule 2

Subject and Object concord

When **everybody, everyone etc. are used, the object must be singular not plural.**

For example

Everybody knows **his or her** name, not : **Everybody** knows **their** name.

Rule 3

Mandative subjunctive concord

When **prayer, suggestion, wish, demand, recommendation or resolution** is used in a sentence, the verb that follows must be **plural, whether the subject is singular or plural.**

For example;

It has been **suggested** that he **go** not ~~goes~~-away.

2) The board has **recommended** that the manager **resign** not ~~resigns~~.

3) I **Pray** that God **help** me on my upcoming examination not God ~~helps~~.

Rule 4

The Principle of proximity

This principle states that when there is a list of nouns or pronouns at the level of the subject, it is the nearest noun or pronoun to the position of the verb that will determine the choice of the verb.

E.g

If James fails his examination, his teachers, his parents, his friends or John () to be blame.

The correct option to fill that blank is, **is** not ~~are~~ because at the subject level, we have his teachers, his friends, his parents and John (four different people)

In order to choose the correct verb, we will need to choose the nearest subject to the gap as the subject which is **John**.

Note: what make us consider the only one noun or pronoun used in this sentence is because of the use of **or**, but if the conjunction used is **and**, all the nouns or pronouns used in the sentence will be considered as the **subject**. I'll explain better when I get to the type of such concord.

Back to james.

But if the question comes in this manner, the answer will be different,

E.g

If James fails his examination, his teachers, his parents, his friends or I () to be blame.

The correct answer here is, **am**, because, I is the nearest subject to the gap, so if **I** is the subject, the verb that goes with it, is **am**.

Rule 5

Many - a concord

When **many - a** is used, the verb and the noun that follows must be **Singular**

E.g

1) **Many a candidate** (not candidates) **speaks** (not speak) bad English expressions.

2) **Many a girl** (not girls) **is** (not are) here.

The real meaning of the statement 1 and 2 are **many candidates and many girls**.

Rule 6

A pair of concord

When **a pair of** is used, the verb must be singular.

E.g

- 1) **A pair of trousers** (not trouser) **lies**(not lie) on the bed.
- 2) **A pair** of scissors **lies** (not lie) on the table.

Rule 7

National Concord

National concord is also called collective noun concord.

A collective noun : is a noun which stands for many unit that constitute that single word.

E.g

- 1) audience which means people who watch programme.
- 2) congregation which means worshipers.
- 3) clergy which means religion officers.
- 4) Club which means association of members.

So whenever, you use a collective noun, the verb that follows must be a plural verb

For example,

Let use club,

Club is a collective noun for members, so, we can also say, **members of this association**

Our club **meet** (not meets) ones in a week.

But in some situations, singular verb goes with a collective noun.

Here is the principle;

If the collective noun performs an **action**, a plural verb follows, but if **not**, a singular verb follows.

E.g

- 1) **Our Club is** celebrating its twentieth anniversary today.

In the above statement, you can see that, **Our Club** performs no action, hence, we use a singular verb.

But;

- 2) **Our Club are** (not is) going on a vacation tomorrow.

You can see that, the above sentence is different from the first sentence, here **the club** is performing an action which is **going**, hence, we will use a plural verb (**are**) in compliance with the rule.

- 3) **The audience are** (not is) partial in their judgement of the winner.

The answer is **are** because the collective noun (audience) perform an action "judgement".

Rule 8

Parenthesis

Parenthesis statement is additional statement to what has already been said before.

Note A parenthetical statement should not be considered in choosing the verb that will follow.

E.g

1) **The teacher**, not her students **is** in the class.

The correct answer is, **is** because (not her students) is just parenthesis, and parenthesis has nothing to do with choosing the verb.

2) **The manager**, not many of his workers, **is** (not are) here now.

not many of his workers is just a parenthesis, therefore, the parenthesis should be totally ignored.

The manager is a singular noun, hence a singular verb.

Rule 9

Accompaniment Concord

When any of these following words are used, the subject of the clause would be the [Join Tutorial Classes](#) that comes before the marker of accompaniment.

Words like, **as much as, alongside, as well as, together with, no less than, in association with, including, like, with, and in collaboration with, etc**

Example 1

Mary, **as well as** her friends **is** (not are) beautiful.

The answer is, **is** because **mary** is the noun that comes before **as well as**, hence mary is the subject and it is a singular noun hence a singular verb.

Example 2

The little kids **alongside** their parents **are** (not is) here.

The answer is **are** not **is** because **the little kids** comes before **alongside**. The subject is plural hence a plural verb.

Rule 10

More than concord

When **more than** is used, the word or number that comes after **more than** will determine the next verb.

For example

1) More than **two apples** are (not is) here.

2) More than **one oranges** is (not are) here.

In the first statement, the answer is **are** not **is** because two attracts are but in the second statement, the

correct option is, **is** not **are** because one attracts is.

Note : Do not think because **more than one means at least two**, That you will use a plural verb after, no you will use a singular verb.

Rule 11

Indefinite pronoun concord

When any of the following words is used, you should use a **Singular verb**

Such words as;

Everybody, everything, everyone, everywhere, no one, nothing, nobody, nowhere, something, someone, somebody, anyone, anything, anybody, anywhere and each. the next verb must be singular.

For example

- 1) Nothing **goes** (not go).
- 2) Everybody **likes** (not like) him.
- 3) Everybody **thinks** (not think) he stole the money.

Rule 12

Relative Concord

When **who, whose, which and that** refers to a previously mentioned noun or pronoun, such noun is a **Relative noun**

E.g

One of the farmers who **plant** (not plants) on the farm **has** (not have) been asked to withdraw.

Rule 13

Uncountable nouns of concord

Countable nouns are nouns that can be quantified in units and numbers, that is, are nouns that can be counted.

E.g chairs, tables, phones etc.

Uncountable nouns are nouns that cannot be quantified in units and numbers.

E.g water, information, equipment.

Note all uncountable nouns will avoid **s** at the back.

It is very wrong to use any of these words below;

E.g **informations, clothes, equipments, furnitures, machineries, datas, advices, evidences, wealths, etc.**

Instead, you say **a piece of, information, evidence, data, cloth, equipment, advice, etc**

It is wrong to say **machineries** instead, you say a machine or two machines.

Other examples of nouns that attracts plural verbs are;

- 1) The police **work hard** (not works), but, that **policeman** (not policemen) **works** (not work) hard. **police and policemen** are collective nouns that is why they attract a plural verb from the seventh rule. But **policeman** is not collective noun but a singular noun, hence a singular verb
- 2)The **headquarters look** (not looks) palatial.
- 3) **Cattle give** (not gives) bad odour, and **a cow gives** bad odour.
- 4) **Aircraft make** (not makes) travelling easier but, that **chopper, airbus, or aeroplane makes** travelling easier.

All the four examples attract plural verb because the subject in each example is a collective noun..

Rule 14

Pluralia tantums

Pluralia tantum are nouns that comes in plural forms.

Some of these words have final s, while some do not. However, whenever any of the following forms appears, it must be followed by a singular verb.

- a) **School Subject : Mathematics, Economics, Civics, Physics, Statistics** etc. you can see that all of them end with s but it does not show plurality.
- b) **Games : Darts, Snakes and Ladders, Draughts, Billiards, Bowls and Skittles** etc, all end with s but do not show plurality.
- c) **Diseases : Measles, Tuberculosis, Shingles, Mumps** etc, all end with s but do not show plurality.
- d) **Others : titles, news, series means**
E.g.
 - 1) The **series** of **incidents makes** (not make) me shudder.
 - 2) The **means** of transport **hastens** (not hasten) travelling.

Note : There are some nouns that do not appear as singular at all but as plurals and they often attract plural verbs.

Such words are : **Funds (money), annals, spirits, surroundings, guts, earnings, arms (weapons), auspices, the middle ages, entrails, bowels, quarters (headquarters), banns, means, holidays, stars, suds, wages, thanks, riches, writs, savings, remains, ashes, goods (product), arrears, outskirts, pains, particulars, fireworks** etc.

All these **nouns not verbs** cannot appear without s and, hence they attract **plural verbs**

E.g

1) His **manners are** (not is) good

2) **The remains** (corpse) of the boy **have** (not has) been buried.

Rule 15

Double title subject concord

When two subjects are joined together by **and** but the two subjects refer to **only one person or thing**, a **singular verb** should be used.

E.g

Our principal and mathematics teacher knows me.

Our principal and mathematics teacher.

In this statement, our principal and mathematics teacher is not two different people but, **our principal is also our mathematics teacher**, hence the subject is our principal, and it is a singular noun, hence, singular verb.

Consider this example;

Our principal and the mathematics teacher.

This is quite different from the first statement, because the principal and the mathematics teacher are two different subjects because of the use of **the Mathematics teacher**

Hence, in this statement you use a plural verb.

Rule 16

Co-ordinate concord

When two subjects are joined together by **and** , the verb to be used should be plural,

e.g.

1) James and John **are** (not is) here.

2) Elizabeth and Johnson **know** (not knows) me.

Rule 17

Categorisation concord

When a **collective name**, denoting category (**not a collective noun**) is used, the verb to be used must be plural.

Categories like : **the poor, the rich, the wealthy, the successful, the gifted, the weak, the young in spirit, the handicapped, the helpless etc.** The verb to be used should be plural.

For example

- 1) The poor **need help** (not helps or needs) from the government.
- 2) The young **are** (not is) disobedient.
- 3) The weak **are** (not is) left to their fates.

Rule 18

Plural number concord

When amount or unit is mentioned in a statement, unit like, five thousand, three hundred, percent, twenty meters, five times, etc. The next verb must be singular.

E.g

- 1) two pounds of flour **is** (not are) too few to bake a cake.
- 2) Ten percent of my earnings **goes** (not go) to my wife.

Rule 19

Mathematical facts

When mathematical facts are used, such as subtraction, multiplication, addition, division, etc. Are used, the verb will be any of **Singular and plural**, that is, a singular or plural verb can be used when mathematical facts are used.

For example

- 1) Ten plus ten **is or are** (are and is are both correct) twenty.
- 2) ten multiplied by two **is or are** twenty.

Both singular and plural are correct.

Rule 20

Every + plural number concord

When **every** precedes a plural, the next verb is plural.

E.g

Every ten litres of oil bought **come** (not comes) with a bonus of an extra litre.

But when **every** appears without any plural number, the verb is singular.

E.g

- 1) **Every boy** (not boys) likes girls.
- 2) **Every man** (not men) likes football.

When **and** joins two or more subjects with **every or each** , the verb should be singular.

E.g

1) Every man and woman **speaks** (not speak) good English here.

2) Every student and teacher **comes** (not come) to school early.

Rule 21

Most or much concord

When **most** is used, the verb will either be singular or plural, depending on whether the referent is a **countable or uncountable noun**,

E.g

1) Most of the boys (countable noun) **are** tall.

2) Most of the time (uncountable noun), John **has** (not have) always been there for her.

When **Much** is used in a statement, the verb to be used must be singular.

E.g

1) Much of the water **has** (not have) been spilled.

Rule 22

All concord

When **all** appears, it means either everything or all the people.

When all means everything, the verb to be used should be **Singular** but when all means all the people, the verb to be used should be **plural**.

E.g

a) All **are** already seated in the hall.

In the above sentence, All means **all the people are already seated in the all**) hence a plural verb.

But;

b) All **is** well with me.

In the above sentence, All means **Everything is well with me** hence a singular verb.

When **all but** is used, the following verb should be **plural**

E.g

1) All but John **are** (not is) in the bus.

That means, only John is absent.

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Rule 23

Either or neither concord

When **either or neither** joins two singular nouns together, the following verb should be **Singular**

E.g

1) Either John or Jackson **knows** (not know) me.

2) Neither Mary nor her friend **was** (not were) here.

But, when **either or neither** joins two subjects (one singular and the other plural), the verb should be chosen by considering the nearer of the two subjects.

E.g

1) Either James or his friends **know** me.

You can see that friends is nearer to the verb gap than it is near James.

These rules also apply, when **but or but even** joins two subjects.

E.g

1) Not only Sola but even teachers **laugh** in school.

2) Not Lawrence but James **speaks** good English.

You can see that James is nearer to the verb gap than it is near Lawrence, hence, you use singular verb.

Rule 24

Each and one of concord

When **each** appears in a concord, **a singular noun + a singular verb** will be chosen.

E.g

1) Each **boy** (not boys) has a car.

But, when **each of or one of** appears, the next noun should be plural but the next verb should be singular.

E.g

1) **Each** of the candidates (not candidate) **stands** (not stand) a good chance to win a scholarship.

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