

Subject-Verb Concord

SUBJECT-VERB CONCORD

- C. of number / person / gender:

- **GRAMMATICAL C.:**

My daughter watches television after supper.

My daughters watch television after supper.

Our people are complaining.

- **NOTIONAL C.:**

England have won the cup.

The audience were enjoying every minute of it.

King prawns cooked in chili salt and pepper was very much better, a simple dish succulently executed.

One in ten take drugs.

(>> Proximity principle)

	present tense			past tense	
lexical verb	DO	HAVE	BE	BE	
<i>I walk</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>have</i>	<i>am</i>	<i>was</i>	
<i>you walk</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>have</i>	<i>are</i>	<i>were</i>	
<i>he/she/it walks</i>	<i>does</i>	<i>has</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>was</i>	
<i>we/you/they walk</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>have</i>	<i>are</i>	<i>were</i>	

CONCORD – PERSON / GENDER

I am your friend. He is your friend.

Either Charlie or I am coming to the party.

Tom hurt his foot. Our teacher took her time.

<i>Everyone thinks</i>	<i>they have the answer.</i>	(frequent)
	<i>he has the answer.</i>	(formal)
	<i>he or she has the answer.</i>	(??)

Good manners are/is a rarity these days.

PROXIMITY PRINCIPLE

- Tendency of a V to agree with a N which is closer which is not the head of a NP:
 - *I don't water mine very often. I wait till the, [[one] of the [leaves]] **start** to go a bit yellow.*
 - *[[One] of the [girls]] **have** got bronchitis.*
 - *It had been a long day, and not [[one] of the [people]] who'd auditioned **were** up to par.*
 - *It remains to be seen [what precise [form] of [words]] **are** agreed by the 12 heads of government.*

NOTIONAL CONCORD

Concord with names, titles, and quotations:

- PL names, titles, and quotations take **SG** concord, if the reference to 1 entity:
 - *This country can ill afford an operation that would permit others to argue that [the United States] **does** not respect international law.*
 - *[The New York Times] **was**, as usual, dryly factual.*...co-referent pronouns are SG:

Concord with measure expressions

- PL measure expressions take **SG** V forms, if the reference is to 1 measure:
 - *When you're bigger, and you've got a real lot to lose, and [two pounds] **is** nothing.*
 - *[Eighteen years] **is** a long time in the life of a motor car.*

Concord with collective nouns

- SG collective Ns allow either **SG** or **PL** concord, depending on whether the focus is on the group as a whole or on the individuals making up the group
 - *It is alleged that the [pork] **is** infected with Salmonella.*
 - *The Catholic [flock] **are** tired of dividing their loyalties.*(SG is preferred)

Doubts about NUMBER:

variable N

WH-words

former/latter

- *There are still [professional watermen] in the Tideway and still [Phelpses] on the river, but [the former] **are** [a dying breed] and [the latter] **are** [amateur competitors].*

... singular concord (V) is used unless there are clear reasons for using the plural

- Countable nouns lacking an overt plural inflection:

*The [sheep] **is** infected by ingesting the mollusc.*

*In its grassy centre the dark-wooled [sheep] **were** grazing.*

*The [series] **is** based around a failed football star.*

*The faunal and stratigraphic [series] **have** had the same order.*

- plural concord with the nouns **people** and **police**

- **Data** both SG and PL, **media** mostly PL

*The [data] **is** a red flag, but lacking the financial data you can't make a case that discrimination is widespread.*

*Conventionally this [data] **has** only been available from a separate source/data base.*

*These [data] **are** valuable when planning monitoring programmes.*

*To anyone in Western Europe or the USA, what the [media] alarmingly **describes** as a "tidal wave" looks like a tiny splash. The [media], all too often criticized for helping to spread inaccurate news, **are** constantly faced with the risk that the information they collect may be less than reliable.*

NOUNS: SINGULAR FORMS ENDING IN –S

... *billiards, darts, measles, ...*

... nouns ending in *-ics* treated as singular or plural:

*Reagan, who claimed that air pollution is caused by trees, is the man you should be quoting to back up your position that [**economics**] is more important than the Earth.*

*With costs being significantly less than they were several years ago, the [**economics**] are pretty good.*

*Yoti are at ease in USA and yet your [**ethics**] are rooted in Indian tradition.*

- **PL concord:** meaning different from the sense of discipline, field of study; definite article or possessive pronoun

... **some –ics only PL:** *acoustics at the Anglican Cathedral have often given rise to speculation about its suitability for Philharmonic concerts.*

... *statistics and tactics* have corresponding SG forms (*e.g. a startling statistic, a delaying tactic*),

CONCORD WITH COORDINATED SUBJECTS:

Coordinated NPs (AND) as Subject: PL concord

- *[Peters and Waterman] **state** that an effective leader must be the master of two ends of the spectrum.*
- *[Tolerance and openness] **have** been made excuses for much which is in fact lubricious (and usually commercial) exploitation of them.*

... but:

- *[The very large number of neurons, and the multiplicity of possible connections among them] **means** that the nervous pathways between and within the ganglia are extremely complicated.*
- *Although [the room and the whole house] **was** full of really good stuff made or renovated by Dadda, secretly he valued nothing more than this bust.*
- *[This bomber and its cargo] probably **weighs** over a hundred tons.*
- SG concord where the phrase can be viewed as a single entity/concept

Coordinated NPs (OR) as Subject: SG concord if coordinated phrases SG

- *[Welch, or his son, or John] **was** about to take a bath.*
- *Check that [no food or drink] **has** been consumed.*

... if 1 NP is PL then PL concord :

- *In fact, it is likely to prove "immeasurably worse" than [either Conservatives or Labour] **have** realised.*

• **Coordination with neither-nor:** SG concord if both NPs SG, and PL if both PL:

- *[Neither geologic evidence nor physical theory] **supports** this conclusion.*
- *But [neither the pilots nor the machinists] **appear** interested.*

• ***either-or***, and ***neither-nor*** coordinate different gram. persons, the V tends to **agree with the closest NP**:

- *Not one leaf is to go out of the garden until [either [I] or [my chief taster]] **gives** the order.*
- *In many years of service [neither [Phillips] nor [I]] **have** seen anything like it.*

• ... the principle of proximity

Concord with indefinite pronouns and quantifiers:

... **somebody/someone**: SG even if co-referents in PL

- *[Somebody]'s got an eyeball in their food.*
- *[Everybody]'s doing what they think they're supposed to do.*
- *[Nobody] **has** their fridges repaired any more, they can't afford it.*

... **quantifiers + uncountable N or SG pronouns**: SG concord

- *[Some] of it is genuine, some of it all a smoke-screen.*
- *[A lot] of hacking **goes** on inside companies by employees trying to find easier ways of doing their jobs.*

... quantifiers + *of* + PL countable N or pronoun:

PL: all, some, few, many/more/most, a few, a great many, a lot, lots, plenty, both (and numerals except one):

- *You know [lots] of other people in big business **have** given money.*
- *[Most] of the copies **are** seized in raids.*

... *each, one*: SG

... *either/neither, any, none*: SG, PL

- *He has talked to the press far more than [either] of us **believes** is appropriate.*
- *I don't give a damn what [either] of you * **think** of me.*
- *[Neither] of these words **is** much help.*
- *[None] of us **has** been aboard except Vinck.*
- *[None] of us really **believe** it's ever going to happen not to us, she said at last.*

(none alone with SG)

... *per cent, a third, two thirds, a/the majority, the rest*: SG
(uncount., SG pronouns), PL (PL)

- *[The rest] of it **is** no secret.*
- *[The rest] of the aliens **look** at me, **look** at each other, **look** down at their food.*
- *As to foreign trade in Eastern Europe, [two thirds] of it **is** within the area.*
- *[Half] the group's sales **are** now outside Britain. About [a third] of products **are** manufactured overseas.*

CONCORD: EXISTENTIAL THERE

- VP with there takes number from NOTIONAL SUBJECT:
 - ...**PL generally with PL phrases, SG with SG ones:**
 - *[There] is virtually no place on Earth that is not moving vertically and horizontally, however slowly.*
 - *[There] **was** candlelight, and [there] **were** bunks with quilts heaped on top.*
 - ... **in conversation:**
 - ***There's** so many police forces that don't even have computers yet so they can't link in with stuff.*
 - *Gary, **there's** apples if you want one.*

Complete the sentences with a singular or plural form of the verb in brackets. Use present tense forms.

1. Keeping large animals as pets in a small house cruel. (*be*)
2. An investigation of the circumstances surrounding her death that she was murdered. (*suggest*)
3. What amazes me his ability to hit the ball so hard. (*be*)
4. The main reasons for his lack of progress to be his poor motivation and inability to concentrate. (*appear*)
5. The cost of housing in the southern parts of the country risen dramatically in the last year. (*have*)
6. That he was the best of the many talented golfers of his generation indisputable. (*seem*)
7. The village's first new houses for 20 years to be built next to Grove Farm. (*be*)
8. Among the many valuable paintings in the gallery a self-portrait by Picasso. (*be*)
9. What I particularly enjoy about the film the scenes in Australia. (*be*)

Correct any mistakes in these sentences or write ✓ if they are already correct.

1. The United States come top of the list of countries ranked by economic performance.
2. The people I know who have seen the film say that it's really good.
3. A report in the *Sunday Times* detail the crimes of a 14-year-old boy in Southcastle.
4. *Northern Lights* are one of Suzanne's favourite books.
5. The stairs leading to the first floor were steep and poorly lit.
6. Chequers is the country house of the British Prime Minister.
7. Whoever made all the mess in the kitchen have to clear it up.
8. The phrase 'men in white coats' are used to talk about psychiatrists.
9. The public needs to be kept informed about progress in the peace talks.
10. Musical chairs are a party game where everyone dashes for a seat when the music stops.