

Vocabulary Building

Subject – The subject of a sentence is the person, place, thing, or idea that is doing or being something. Who or what is a sentence about? Who or what “has” the verb? Who or what is the verb in the sentence referring to?

Verb – A word that represents an action or a state of being.

3rd Person Singular – Refers to the subjects “he,” “she,” or “it.” Any singular person or thing that is not the speaker or the listener, but a “third” person.

3rd Person Plural – Refers to the subject “they.” Any people or thing, that are not the speaker or the listener, but a “third” party.

Super Bowl – An American football game that determines the champions for the year.

Are there more unfamiliar words?

Look up words you don’t know on the Merriam-Webster Learner’s Dictionary at www.learnersdictionary.com.

Want More Practice?

There are staff in the Learning Center who would love to help you with your writing!

The College Skills Zone

The College Skills Zone is a great place to engage in conversations that help you understand concepts, especially some basic grammar concepts, and then practice those skills. The College Skills Zone is a place where you can just drop in anytime during open hours.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center assistants are trained to help you with any aspect of the writing process, from understanding an assignment, to brainstorming, to revising your essays. You can drop in during open hours or make a 30-minute appointment for a specific time.

English Language Learner Specialist

A specialist for English Language Learners, Sarah Mosser, is available in the Learning Center during certain hours for drop-in or appointments. Because her schedule varies, it is best to make appointments.

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Linn-Benton
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
WRITING CENTER

Grammar

Subject-Verb Agreement



Go-To Guides

Go-To Guides are designed to help in all areas of the writing process.

A Brief Explanation

In English, the subject of the sentence has to connect with the verb of the sentence by agreeing with or matching the verb. Different forms of the verb are used depending on the subject.

There are three main verb types that change based on the subject of the sentence: present tense to-be verbs (am, are, is), past tense to-be verbs (was, were), and then simple present tense verbs—any verb in the simple present (walk, say, jump, sit, claim, negotiate, etc.).

1. Present tense to-be verbs:

	Singular	Plural
1 st	I am	We are
2 nd	You are	You guys are
3 rd	He/She/It is	They are

2. Past tense to-be verbs:

	Singular	Plural
1 st	I was	We were
2 nd	You were	You guys
3 rd	He/She/It	They were

3. Simple present tense verbs (using “walk” as an example):

	Singular	Plural
1 st	I walk	We walk
2 nd	You walk	You guys walk
3 rd	He/She/It	They walk

*Note that for simple present tense verbs, only the 3rd person singular form, He/She/It, changes the form of the verb by adding an “s” at the end of the verb.

Examples

The complexities of 3rd person singular:

Perhaps the most confusing subject is 3rd person singular: He/She/It. This can be confusing because a lot of subjects fall in to the “it” category even if they might seem plural. Below is a list of examples that would be considered 3rd person singular:

1. A group of people: Though groups of people may seem plural, like a family or a team, we treat them as singular, as one family or one team.

Examples: My family **is** in Redmond.

The team **practices** every Monday.

The group **was** careful not to be too loud.

2. Bodies of people: Anyone, everyone, someone, no one, nobody. Though words like “everyone” or “everybody” seem like they refer to a lot of people, we treat them as singular. It is like we are saying “every individual person” or “no individual person” instead of “all people.”

Examples: Everyone **was** watching the Super Bowl.

No one **likes** to feel belittled.

Anyone **is** welcome to come.

Nobody **seems** to know the answer.

3. The abstract “it”: The subject “it” can really be any singular thing that isn’t a person.

Examples: My favorite color **is** green.

The sunset last night **was** beautiful.

The compromise **seems** to be pretty fair.

Gymnastics **is** my favorite Olympic sport.

When to use 3rd person plural:

3rd person plural (they) might also be tricky sometimes to recognize. We use it for compound subjects even if the individual subjects would normally take a different form.

Example: My brother and sister **are** going to Seattle.

In the above example, both subjects are considered 3rd person singular and normally would be matched with “is.”

Individually, those sentences would read: 1) My brother **is** going to Seattle. And 2) My sister **is** going to Seattle.

However, both individuals are the subject of the sentence, so it becomes 3rd person plural, and “are” is used to match “they.”

More examples: You and JR **were** good friends last year.

My family and best friend **are** close.

My brother and sister **walk** to school.

Try it Out!

True or False?

1. T F In every sentence, the verb has to match, or “agree,” with the subject of the sentence.
2. T F The verb changes based on the subject for every tense in English, not just a select few.
3. T F The three verb tenses that change based on the subject are: present to-be verbs, past to-be verbs, and simple present tense.
4. T F For simple present tense verbs, only the 3rd person singular form changes the verb by adding –s on the end.
5. T F The sentence “He jump high” shows the correct verb form for 3rd person singular.

Answers: 1. T 2. F 3. T 4. T 5. F

Correct or Incorrect?

Label each sentence with either a “C” for “Correct” or an “I” for “Incorrect.” Make any necessary corrections to incorrect sentences

1. _____ Anyone is more than welcome to come.
2. _____ We is going to have fun.
3. _____ I am planning on leaving in the morning.
4. _____ It seem like a good plan.
5. _____ Everyone was there.
6. _____ She jump very high.
7. _____ She say that this is a good party.

Answers: 1. C 2. I, are 3. C 4. I, seems 5. C 6. I, jumps 7. I, says

Write It Out!

Answer the following questions in complete sentences. Make sure that your subjects and verbs agree.

1. What is your favorite place to visit and why?

2. How would you describe your best friend’s personality?

3. Who is a person you admire and why?
