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Subject–verb agreement

The rooftop garden





Grammar at a glance

When you want to...	Form to use	Worked example
Match the present verb	she walks / they walk	The gardener waters. The helpers water.
Match be and have	I am / you are / she has	I am ready. She has the map.
Ask or negate	does + base verb	Does she carry it? She does not carry it.
Find the subject head	the box of pens + is	The pens in this box are blue.

SELECT A ROW TO OPEN ITS LESSON

SUBJECT–VERB AGREEMENT

One gardener, two gardeners



Sam starts the watering rota. Lily joins later. Write instructions that change when the team changes.

In the present simple, she waters describes one gardener. They water describes more than one. I and you also use water.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
One gardener	She waters the plants.	She refers to one gardener. Waters has the present-simple ending -s.
Two gardeners	They water the plants.	They refers to two gardeners. Use water, without -s.
Another example	The gardener waters. The helpers water.	Match the present verb. Pattern: she walks / they walk.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

I water the seedlings. She waters the seedlings.

Should the subject and verb both end in s?

No. The gardeners water; the gardener waters. Find the subject's number and person rather than matching spelling endings.

YOUR TURN

"The rabbit ___ near the gate every day."

hop / hops

> **Answer • hops**
> The rabbit is singular.

SUBJECT–VERB AGREEMENT

Be and have change too



The team checks who is ready and who has the tools.

Be and have change with the subject. Compare I am, you are, she is, she has and they have.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Sam reports	I am ready. I have a spade.	With I, use am and have.
Lily reports	She is ready. She has a spade.	With she, use is and has.
The team reports	They are ready. They have spades.	With they, use are and have.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Lily has gloves. You have gloves.

Can you replace is with has whenever the subject is singular?

No. Lily is ready describes her state; Lily has a can describes possession. Both agreement and meaning must fit.

YOUR TURN

“You ___ welcome here.”

are / is / am

> Answer • are
> You takes are.

SUBJECT–VERB AGREEMENT

Do, does and the base verb

Some plants need shade; others do not. Ask useful questions and write the care checklist without putting an ending on both verbs.

In a present-simple question, does carries the ending. The next verb keeps its base form, as in “Does she water it?”

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Daily routine	She waters the fern.	In this affirmative sentence, waters carries the present-simple ending.
A negative	She does not water the fern.	Does carries the agreement. The action verb returns to water.
A question	Does she water the fern?	Does moves before the subject in this question. Water stays in its base form.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Agreement in helper	Subject	Base action	Frequency
Does	Lily	water	daily?

Is does waters just extra emphasis?

No. Use does water. In an emphatic statement, “Lily does water daily” still keeps the action in the base form.

YOUR TURN

Change only the action verb: “Does the bird eats seeds?”

> **Answer • Does the bird eat seeds?**
> After does, use eat.

SUBJECT–VERB AGREEMENT

Find the real subject



Visitors are coming. The welcome board has longer sentences. Find the main subject so a nearby noun does not trick you.

Find the head of the subject. In “The bag of apples is heavy”, bag controls the verb.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
One basket	The basket of seeds is ready.	The whole subject is The basket of seeds; its head noun is basket. Of seeds does not make that head plural.
Two baskets	The baskets of seeds are ready.	Now baskets is plural, so use are.
Each volunteer	Each of the volunteers has a badge.	Each treats the volunteers one at a time and takes a singular verb.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Everyone is ready. Sam and Lily are ready.

Does everyone take are because it means many people?

No. Everyone is grammatically singular: everyone is welcome. Meaning many people does not automatically create a plural verb.

YOUR TURN

“The bag of apples ___ on the bench.”

are / is

> Answer • is
> Bag is singular.

ONE LAST CHALLENGE

One basket or many apples?

Complete both messages. “The basket of apples ___ ready.” “The apples in the basket ___ ready.”



A POSSIBLE ANSWER

The basket of apples is ready. The apples in the basket are ready.

Basket controls is in the first message. Apples controls are in the second.

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