

A strong command of the English language is directly linked to career advancement, to the money we make and even to social success. Every day people judge us by the words we use. Right or wrong, but they make assumptions about our intelligence, our education or our capabilities. Nothing makes a better impression than a solid mastery of the English language. Not having a strong command of language can be a serious handicap, an obstacle that prevents us from achieving our goals. A person who can't express ideas eloquently, who hesitates because of the uncertainty about the right word or proper grammar construction may appear less than fully competent and qualified. It's time to be equipped to speak with confidence at all times. And though we keep enslaving at all sorts of reference-books, dictionaries etc there are still things we are never certain of, so we try to ignore this or that word (e.g. implicit, explicit), substitute some patterns that don't seem to be absolutely clear to us, or what is much worse we, teachers make mistakes.

Swatting is a great thing. But it doesn't explain nature of the phenomenon. If we are able to say

Somebody has forgotten their coat, haven't they?

we must be able to explain why we organize the sentence this way. Clarity is next to divinity. Actually **1** come up with an idea of establishing the heading that could bring verbal advantage closer to us and make our language gaps filled and completed.

MAKING WORDS AGREE

Agreement Between Subjects and Verbs

1 Agreement with Singular and Plural Subjects

a) A prepositional phrase that comes between a subject and its verb doesn't affect subject-verb agreement.

e.g. The arrival of several new sports cars has caused much excitement at a showroom.

Exercise: (choose appropriate verb)

e.g. The lines of this table (follows, follow) the style of the late Victorian period).

Follow

1. The air (has, have) become stale since we shut the windows.
2. Moss usually (grow, grows) on the north side of the trees.
3. The eggplants in our garden (is, are) particularly large this summer.
4. The children in this photograph (look, looks) uncomfortable.
5. The lace on these dresses (was, were) handmade.
6. The newspapers in this collection (dates, date) back to the Revolutionary War.
7. An acre of trees and meadows (surrounds, surround) the little church.
8. The numbers next to the lines on this map (indicates, indicate) the number of miles between each interchange.
9. The guests at the meeting (is, are) wearing name tags.
10. The handwriting in these bills and letters (seems, seem) to belong to the same person.

2. Agreement with Compound Subjects.

a) a compound subject is made up of two or more subjects joined by a conjunction such as *or*, *nor*, *and*

— **2** or more singular subjects joined by *or* or *nor* must have a singular verb.

e.g. Either the telephone or the doorbell is ringing.

b) problems occur when the parts of a compound subject joined by *or* or *nor* are mixed in number.

— when singular and plural subjects are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb must agree with the closest subject.

e.g. Neither the nails nor the hammer is in the tool chest

Neither the hammer nor the nails are in the tool chest.

— a compound subject joined by *and* is usually plural and must have a plural verb.

e.g. The dog and the cat are fighting.

The dogs and cats are fighting.

The does and the cat are fighting.

Exceptions:

1. If the parts of the compound subject taken together are thought of as a single thing, then the compound subject is considered singular and must have a singular verb, have

e.g. Bacon and eggs is a very popular breakfast
(bacon + eggs = one breakfast).

2. This exception involves the words

every
each

Either of these words before a compound subject indicates the need for a **singular** verb. *

e.g. Every tree and shrub has been primed.

a

Exercise № 1 (choose the appropriate verb)

Neither the twins nor their dog (has, have) managed to stay out of the swimming pool today.

Has

1. Either Sam or Lena (drives, drive) the car here each day.
2. I will go even though neither Leslie nor Bill (is, are) going.
3. Either potatoes or corn (tastes, taste) good with chicken.
4. Neither the front door nor the windows (has been, have been) locked.
5. Neither the texture nor the colours of this fabric (goes, go) well with that hat.
6. Neither the play nor the two movie versions (captures, capture) the flavour of the original book.
7. Neither the subway system nor the bus routes (serves, serve) that part of the town.
8. Neither Meg nor Elsa (wants, want) to go to the museum.
9. Neither greeting cards nor wrapping paper (is, are) sold in this store.
10. Either one book or a few articles (is, are) sufficient background for the report.

Exercise № 2 (choose the appropriate verb)

Every singer and dancer on this stage (knows, know) how much work the show needs.

Knows

1. Pens and pencils (was, were) poised to write.
2. Peanut butter and jelly (is, are) my favourite combination for sandwiches.

3. The books and magazines on the shelf (was, were) out of order.
4. Every boot, shoe and belt in that store (is, are) made of leather.
5. Cherry pie and apple strudel (was, were) our choices.
6. A prince and princess always (lives, live) happily ever after.
7. Each folder and packet in the files (was, were) labeled.
8. Ducks and geese usually (stops, stop) at this park on their way south.
9. Every worker and manager in our plants (offers, offer) suggestions for improvements.
10. The shops and department stores in this mall (is, are) paying more rent this year than ever before.

Exercise № 3 (choose the appropriate verb)

Every cake and pie on these shelves (is, are) on sale.

is

1. Neither Sal nor her sisters (has, have) seen the puppies.
2. Pork and beans (was, were) our favourite campfire food when we were younger.
3. The glass in the panes of these Colonial cabinets (comes, come) from England.
4. Each fruit and vegetable in these bins (was, were) grown on our farm.
5. Either the Capitol or the White House (fits, fit) into our schedule.
6. Neither the flowers in this drawing nor the landscapes in that one (looks, look) realistic.
7. This dress and that pair of jeans (costs, cost) more this year than they did last year,
8. Francine and Clare always (performs, perform) together in our variety shows.
9. Jeff (does, do) fine work.
10. The players on either football team (is, are) almost too muddy to tell apart.

Exercise № 4 (correct errors)

Neither the moon nor the stars is visible tonight.

Neither the moon nor the stars are visible tonight (correct).

1. Strawberries, sour cream and brown sugar is the ingredients in the dessert.
2. Neither the hurricane lamps nor the chandelier provide sufficient light for this room.
3. Each basketball uniform and sweat suit were embossed with the name of the school.
4. Every typewriter in our main office come equipped with computer memories.