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SOLVING  
COMMON  
SENTENCE  
PROBLEMS

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A

Los Angeles nightclub (host/hosts) a ranchera night, it (draw/draws) a large number of English-speaking fans in their twenties. (10) Clearly, ranchera musicians (deserve/deserves) more attention from the music industry.

◆ PRACTICE 23-2

Fill in the blank with the correct present tense form of the verb.

**Example:** Americans commute an average of 25 minutes to work each day. (commute)

(1) "Extreme commuters" \_\_\_\_\_ at least 90 minutes getting to work. (spend) (2) Their commutes \_\_\_\_\_ much longer than the average American's trip to work. (take) (3) Sometimes, an extreme commuter even \_\_\_\_\_ state lines to get to work. (cross) (4) Often, a person \_\_\_\_\_ an extra-long commute for housing reasons. (choose) (5) Far outside the city, the "exurbs" \_\_\_\_\_ more affordable houses. (offer) (6) A more rural area usually \_\_\_\_\_ more peaceful surroundings as well. (provide) (7) Many extreme commuters \_\_\_\_\_ the time they spend commuting. (hate) (8) Others \_\_\_\_\_ the time they get to think, talk to other commuters, or listen to music. (enjoy) (9) In any case, extreme commuters usually \_\_\_\_\_ such a long way to work because they have to. (travel) (10) For better or worse, more and more people \_\_\_\_\_ extreme commuters every year. (become)

■ WRITING FIRST: Flashback

Look back at your response to the Writing First activity on page 370. Choose two sentences that contain present tense verbs, and rewrite the sentences on the lines below. Underline the subject of each sentence once and the verb twice. If the subject and verb of each sentence do not agree, correct them.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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23 B

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Subject-Verb  
Agreement**B Compound Subjects**

The subject of a sentence is not always a single word. It can also be a **compound subject**, made up of two or more words. To avoid subject-verb agreement problems with compound subjects, follow these rules.

- When the parts of a compound subject are connected by *and*, the compound subject takes a plural verb.

<sup>s</sup>                      <sup>v</sup>  
John and Marsha share an office.

- When the parts of a compound subject are connected by *or*, the verb agrees with the part of the subject that is closer to it.

<sup>s</sup>                      <sup>v</sup>  
The mayor or the council members meet with community  
 groups.

<sup>s</sup>                      <sup>v</sup>  
The council members or the mayor meets with community  
 groups.

◆ **PRACTICE 23-3**

Underline the correct form of the verb in each of the following sentences. Make sure that the verb agrees with its compound subject.

**Example:** Gloves or a scarf (make/makes) a good wintertime gift.

1. Cars and trucks (fill/fills) the municipal parking lot each day.
2. Grapes or an apple (provide/provides) a nutritious addition to a lunch.
3. A guard and a video monitoring system (watch/watches) the bank's lobby during business hours.
4. A vegetable or french fries (come/comes) with the steak dinner.
5. A pianist or a guitarist (play/plays) at the club every weekend.
6. Nurses or nurse practitioners (offer/offers) round-the-clock patient care.
7. According to an old saying, fish and houseguests (smell/smells) bad after three days.
8. Flowers or a get-well balloon (cheer/cheers) people up when they are ill.
9. The restaurant owner or her daughter always (greet/greets) customers.
10. A sliding glass door or French windows (allow/allows) light into a room.

► **Word Power**

**municipal** relating to a town, city, or a local government

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SOLVING  
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■ WRITING FIRST: Flashback

Look at the two sentences you wrote for the Flashback activity on page 372. Rewrite them with compound subjects. In each sentence, make sure the compound subjects agree with the verb.

C Be, Have, and Do

The verbs *be*, *have*, and *do* are irregular in the present tense. For this reason, they can present problems with subject-verb agreement. Memorizing their forms is the only sure way to avoid such problems.

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Subject-Verb Agreement with Be

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
First person	I am	we are
Second person	you are	you are
Third person	he/she/it is Tran is the boy is	they are Tran and Ryan are the boys are

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Subject-Verb Agreement with Have

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
First person	I have	we have
Second person	you have	you have
Third person	he/she/it has Shana has the student has	they have Shana and Robert have the students have

Subject-Verb Agreement with Do

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
First person	I do	we do
Second person	you do	you do
Third person	he/she/it does Ken does the book does	they do Ken and Mia do the books do

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C

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Subject-Verb Agreement

◆ PRACTICE 23-4

Fill in the blank with the correct present tense form of the verb *be*, *have*, or *do*.

**Example:** Sometimes, people do damage without really meaning to. (do)

- (1) Biologists \_\_\_\_\_ serious worries about the damage that invading species of animals can cause. (have) (2) The English sparrow \_\_\_\_\_ one example. (be) (3) It \_\_\_\_\_ a role in the decline in the number of bluebirds. (have) (4) On the Galapagos Islands, cats \_\_\_\_\_ another example. (be) (5) Introduced by early explorers, they currently \_\_\_\_\_ much damage to the eggs of the giant tortoises that live on the islands. (do) (6) Scientists today \_\_\_\_\_ worried about a new problem. (be) (7) This \_\_\_\_\_ a situation caused by wildlife agencies that put exotic fish into lakes and streams. (be) (8) They \_\_\_\_\_ this to please those who enjoy fishing. (do) (9) Although popular with people who fish, this policy \_\_\_\_\_ major drawbacks. (have) (10) It \_\_\_\_\_ one drawback in particular: many species of fish have been pushed close to extinction. (have)

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■ WRITING FIRST: Flashback

Look back at your response to the Writing First activity on page 370. Have you used a form of *be*, *have*, or *do* in any of your sentences? If so, copy these sentences on the lines below. Have you used the correct forms of *be*, *have*, and *do*? Correct any agreement errors.

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23 D

### D Words between Subject and Verb

Don't be confused when a group of words (for example, a prepositional phrase) comes between the subject and the verb. These words do not affect subject-verb agreement.

CORRECT     <sup>S</sup> High levels of mercury <sup>V</sup> occur in some fish.

CORRECT     <sup>S</sup> Water in the fuel lines <sup>V</sup> causes an engine to stall.

CORRECT     <sup>S</sup> Food between the teeth <sup>V</sup> leads to decay.

An easy way to identify the subject of the sentence is to cross out the words that come between the subject and the verb.

High levels ~~of mercury~~ occur in some fish.

Water ~~in the fuel lines~~ causes an engine to stall.

Food ~~between the teeth~~ leads to decay.

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### FOCUS Words between Subject and Verb

Look out for words such as *in addition to*, *along with*, *together with*, *as well as*, *except*, and *including*. Phrases introduced by these words do not affect subject-verb agreements.

<sup>S</sup> St. Thomas, ~~along with St. Croix and St. John~~, <sup>V</sup> is part of the United States Virgin Islands.

### ◆ PRACTICE 23-5

In each of the following sentences, cross out the words that separate the subject and the verb. Then, underline the subject of the sentence once and the verb that agrees with the subject twice.

**Example:** The messages ~~on the phone~~ say/says that Carol is out of town.

1. Each summer, fires from lightning (cause/causes) a great deal of damage.
2. Global warming from pollution (make/makes) the earth hotter.
3. One out of ten men (gets/get) prostate cancer.
4. The wood stove in the living room (heat/heats) the entire house.



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E

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Subject-Verb  
Agreement

5. Trans fat in a variety of foods (lead/leads) to increased rates of heart disease.
6. A good set of mechanic's tools (costs/cost) a lot of money.
7. New Orleans, along with other Gulf Coast cities, (suffers/suffer) from severe flooding.
8. The United States as well as Germany and Japan (produces/produce) the world's best cars.
9. Fans at a concert (gets/get) angry if the band is late.
10. The book on the table (look/looks) like an interesting story.

■

WRITING FIRST: Flashback

Look back at your response to the Writing First activity on page 370. Can you find any sentences in which a prepositional phrase comes between the subject and the verb? If so, write each subject and verb on the lines below.

Subject	Verb
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Now, correct any errors in subject-verb agreement.

E

Collective Noun Subjects

**Collective nouns** are words (such as *family* and *audience*) that name a group of people or things but are singular. Because they are singular, they always take singular verbs.

The <sup>s</sup>team <sup>v</sup>practices five days a week in the gym.

Frequently Used Collective Nouns

army	club	family	jury
association	committee	gang	mob
band	company	government	team
class	corporation	group	union

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F

◆ PRACTICE 23-6

Fill in the blank with the correct present tense form of the verb.

- Example: The club \_\_\_\_\_ *is* supposed to meet every Tuesday. (be)
1. The jury usually \_\_\_\_\_ a verdict after much discussion. (reach)
  2. Before the exam, the class \_\_\_\_\_ into study groups. (break)
  3. Each year, the family \_\_\_\_\_ to the beach for a vacation. (go)
  4. Every year, the corporation \_\_\_\_\_ a new health plan for its employees. (establish)
  5. A group of lions \_\_\_\_\_ resting under the trees. (be)

■ WRITING FIRST: Flashback

Look back at your response to the Writing First activity on page 370. Can you find any sentences that have collective nouns as subjects? If so, check carefully to make sure the subjects and verbs agree. If they do not, revise each incorrect sentence. Write the correct form of each verb on the lines below.

Collective Noun Subject	Verb
_____	_____
_____	_____

F Indefinite Pronoun Subjects

**Indefinite pronouns**—*anybody*, *everyone*, and so on—do not refer to a particular person, place, or idea.

Most indefinite pronouns are singular and take singular verbs.

<sup>s</sup> No one <sup>v</sup> likes getting up early.

<sup>s</sup> Everyone <sup>v</sup> likes to sleep late.

<sup>s</sup> Somebody <sup>v</sup> likes beets.

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23 F

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Subject-Verb  
Agreement*Singular Indefinite Pronouns*

another	either	neither	one
anybody	everybody	nobody	somebody
anyone	everyone	no one	someone
anything	everything	nothing	something
each	much		

A few indefinite pronouns (*both, many, several, few, others*) are plural and take plural verbs.

<sup>S</sup> Many <sup>V</sup> were left homeless by the flood.

**FOCUS Indefinite Pronouns as Subjects**

If a prepositional phrase comes between the indefinite pronoun and the verb, cross out the prepositional phrase to help you identify the sentence's subject.

<sup>S</sup> Each ~~of the boys~~ <sup>V</sup> has a bike.

<sup>S</sup> Many ~~of the boys~~ <sup>V</sup> have bikes.

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◆ **PRACTICE 23-7**

Circle the correct verb in each sentence.

**Example:** Each of the three streams in our area (is/are) polluted.

- One of the streams no longer (have/has) any fish.
- Another (contain/contains) a lot of algae.
- Everybody (want/wants) to improve the situation.
- However, no one (are/is) willing to do anything.
- Somebody (need/needs) to take the lead.
- Everyone (know/knows) that pollution is difficult to control.
- Neither of the candidates (seem/seems) willing to act.
- Whenever anyone (ask/asks) them for suggestions, neither (have, has) any.

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► **Word Power**

**algae** water-dwelling organisms that look like plants but have no roots, stems, or leaves



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9. According to the candidates, everything possible (is/are) being done.
10. One of my friends (say/says) that she will not vote for either candidate.

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■ **WRITING FIRST: Flashback**

Look back at your response to the Writing First activity on page 370. Do any of your sentences contain indefinite pronoun subjects? Write each indefinite pronoun subject and its verb on the lines below. Do all the verbs agree with their indefinite pronoun subjects? Correct any errors below.

<i>Indefinite Pronoun Subject</i>	<i>Verb</i>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

© Co **G Verbs before Subjects**

A verb always agrees with its subject—even if the verb comes *before* the subject. In questions, for example, word order is reversed, with the verb coming before the subject or with the subject coming between two parts of the verb.

Where <sup>v</sup> is <sup>s</sup> the bank?

<sup>v</sup> Are <sup>s</sup> you <sup>v</sup> going to the party?

If you have trouble identifying the subject of a question, answer the question with a statement. (In the statement, the subject will come before the verb.)

Where <sup>v</sup> is <sup>s</sup> the bank? The <sup>s</sup> bank <sup>v</sup> is on Walnut Street.

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23 G

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Subject-Verb  
Agreement**FOCUS There Is and There Are**

When a sentence begins with *there is* or *there are*, the word *there* is not the subject of the sentence. The subject comes after the form of the verb *be*.

v                      s

There is one chief justice on the Supreme Court.

v                      s

There are nine justices on the Supreme Court.

**◆ PRACTICE 23-8**

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Underline the subject of each sentence, and circle the correct form of the verb.

**Example:** Who (is/are) the baseball player who broke Hank Aaron's home run record?

- Where (do/does) snakes go in the winter?
- Why (do/does) people who cannot afford them buy lottery tickets?
- (Is/Are) there any states that do not follow Daylight Savings Time?
- How (do/does) an immigrant become a citizen?
- There (is/are) three branches of government in the United States.
- There (is/are) one way to improve vocabulary—read often.
- There (is/are) some money available for financial aid.
- There (is/are) four steps involved in changing the oil in a car.
- What (is/are) the country with the highest literacy rate?
- Where (do/does) the football team practice in the off season?

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**■ Culture Clue**

In the United States, *Daylight Savings Time* provides more usable daylight hours during the spring, summer, and fall months. This helps people to decrease their energy consumption.