

Just when you thought you understood subject-verb agreement . . .

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Several past quizzes have dealt with subject-verb agreement, a usage problem which at first glance seems relatively simple. The rule applying to this situation states that a subject and its verb must agree in number.

If the subject is singular, use a singular verb; if the subject is plural, use a plural verb. Problems sometimes arise, however, in determining what the subject is or in deciding whether the word is singular or plural. Today we will deal with some of those special situations.

When the subject is a fraction, measurement, amount of money, weight, volume or interval of time, use a singular verb when referring to a single unit: *One half of the cake is gone.* Use a plural verb when referring to a number of separate units: *One half of the club members are present.* Works that are joined to the subject by words such as *with*, *as well as*, and *including* do not affect the number: *His fishing gear, including rod, reel and tackle box, was lost overboard.*

The title of a book, play, painting, musical composition or other such work is singular. The name of a country or of an organization is singular when it refers to an entire country or group.

Finally, when one subject is affirmative and another is negative, the verb agrees with the affirmative subject: *He, not I, is in charge of the program.*

In the following sentences, choose the correct verb form from those in the parentheses.

1. Three-fourths of the class (want, wants) to have a party on Friday night.
2. *Romeo and Juliet* (is, are) my favorite play.
3. Jim, as well as his parents, (is, are) attending parent night at school.
4. Facts, not prejudice, (is, are) needed to resolve this problem.
5. Sympathy and comfort, as well as medical attention, (is, are) important to people who are ill.
6. The League of Women Voters (is, are) meeting tonight.
7. Two quarters (was, were) left in the telephone booth.
8. Five miles (is, are) too great a distance to jog.
9. The team captain, with all the team members, (was, were) introduced before the banquet.
10. *Gulliver's Travels* (has been, have been) required reading for that literature class.
11. The bill, together with advertising materials, (was, were) delivered today.
12. Julie sent word that she, together with her husband, (was, were) spending a week at the lake.
13. Six from eight (leave, leaves) two.
14. Three fourths of the house (has, have) been painted.
15. I, not you, (am, are) responsible for the program.
16. Three weeks (has, have) passed since I sent the letter.
17. The United States (has, have) become more aware of environmental problems.
18. Ten minutes (was, were) the time needed to answer each query.
19. Five pennies (was, were) lying on the sidewalk.
20. The Fairfield News (has, have) been published since 1923.

The correct answers follow.

1. want; 2. is; 3. is; 4. are; 5. are; 6. is; 7. were; 8. is; 9. was; 10. has been; 11. was; 12. was; 13. leaves; 14. has; 15. am; 16. have; 17. has; 18. was; 19. were; 20. has.

Deduct 5 points for each incorrect answer. The grading scale is 90-100, A; 80-89, B; 70-79, C; 60-69, D; below 60, F.

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