

San José State University Writing Center  
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When two or more singular nouns or pronouns are connected by *or* or *nor*, use a singular verb.

**Example:** The cat or dog *is* responsible for the mess.

When a compound subject contains a singular and a plural noun or pronoun, the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is nearer the verb.

**Example:** The cat or dogs *are* responsible for the mess.

When two or more singular subjects are connected by *either/or* or *neither/nor*, the verb is singular.

**Example:** Either the cat or dog *is* responsible for the mess.

When two or more plural subjects are connected by *either/or* or *neither/nor*, the verb is plural.

**Example:** Flowers or bushes *are* a good choice for your garden.

### Subjects and Verbs Separated by Other Words

Be careful if a prepositional phrase comes between the subject and the verb. Remember that the verb agrees with the subject, not a pronoun or noun in the phrase.

**Examples:** The study on magnets *is* informative.  
The boxes of chocolates in the fridge *taste* delicious.

Expressions such as *with*, *together with*, *along with*, *including*, *as well as*, *accompanied by*, *in addition to*, or *as well* do not change the quantity of the subject. If the subject is singular, the verb is too.

**Example:** Sarah, as well as her business partner, *was* exhausted after the trip.

### Collective-Noun Subjects

Collective nouns refer to a group. They usually take singular verbs, but it depends on whether they refer to the group as a single unit or to the multiple members of the group.



Nouns such as tweezers, shears, trousers, pants, chopsticks, glasses, and scissors require plural verbs.

**Examples:** My new pants *are* office appropriate.  
Chopsticks *are* fun to eat with.  
Those scissors *are* dull.

### Activity

Determine whether each sentence has subject-verb agreement and explain why.

1. Bob, in addition to John, are going to the park.
2. Each of the plays depicts a strong moral lesson.
3. My passion are stamps.
4. Next to the windmill stands silos filled with grain.
5. Of the two applicants, neither has much promise.
6. The news are on at 8 p.m.
7. A diet