VERB/SUBJECT AGREEMENT RULES

1. A verb should agree with its subject in person (1st person is the speaker; 2nd person is the person to whom you are speaking; 3rd person is the person(s) you are speaking about). The verb should also agree with its subject in number (singular or plural).

   He is the winner. (He is singular, so the singular verb is must be used.)
   They are the winners. (They is a plural pronoun; are is the plural verb.)
   Marie and Sam are acrobats. (Marie and Sam together make a plural subject, so the plural verb are must be used.)

2. A singular subject, separated from the verb by a plural modifier (a word or phrase that relates to the subject) still uses the singular form of the verb.

   Joan, with her children, was in the store. Joan is the singular subject, so the singular verb was must be used.
   Joe, as well as many of his friends, is a fast swimmer. Joe is the singular subject, so the singular verb is must be used.
   The manager, in addition to his staff, thinks the news is very discouraging. Manager is the singular subject, so the singular verb thinks must be used.

3. The following indefinite pronouns (pronouns not immediately identifying the noun they stand for) are considered singular:

   another  anybody  anyone  each  either  everybody
   everyone  neither  nobody  one  somebody  someone

   Everybody is taking the test.  Neither was a fast typist.
   Everyone of those individuals was in the office early.

4. The following indefinite pronouns are considered plural:

   both  few  many  others  several

   Many of the applicants are capable.  A few were planning to go.

5. The following indefinite pronouns are considered singular OR plural:

   all  any  none  some

   All of the jobs were filled.  All of that cake has been eaten.
6. When the word **there** which introduces a sentence, do not use it as the subject of the sentence. The verb agrees with the noun that follows the verb.

   There is one desk in his office. (**Desk** is the noun with which the verb must agree.) There are several errors in his memo. (**Errors** is the noun with which the verb **are** must agree.)

7. When the word **or** or the word **nor** is used to combine two or more subjects, the verb agrees with the subject **nearest** to the verb.

   A pencil or a **pen** is required.
   Neither the boys **nor** the **driver** was responsible.
   Either Marie or the **boys** are coming soon.
   A pencil or some **pens** were left behind.

8. A collective noun (names of groups or collections, such as mob, crowd, committee) takes a singular verb. Parts of numbers or sums of money are collective nouns (three-fifths, one-third, $100).

   The **staff** is meeting today.
   The **stack** of papers **was** lost.
   The **company** **is** located in Peru.
   The **team** **has won** several games.
   The **crowd** of applicants **has gone** home for the day.

9. Fractions take singular or plural verbs depending on the modifier (a word or phase that relates to the subject).

   **One-fifth** of the CAKE **was** left.
   **Two-thirds** of the STUDENTS **were** absent.

10. The expression "The number" takes a singular verb.

    The **number** of applicants is fourteen.
    The **number** of personnel **has** increased.

11. The expression "A number" takes a plural verb.

    **A number** of customers **have** complained.
    **A number** of performances **are** canceled.

12. Names of companies or literary works that appear plural are considered singular.

    **The Women** is a painting.
    Martin, Martin, and Meyerson is her law firm.