Subject-Verb Agreement

Singular subjects take singular verbs**:**

That **dog belongs** to the woman down the street.

A **guy** in my office **likes** to joke.

That **noise hurts** my ears.

Plural subjects take plural verbs**:**

The **instructions are** confusing.

My **parents work** long hours.

The **boxes are** in the garage.

When the subject and verb are separated by a prepositional phrase, underline the prepositional phrase in order to find the subject.(Aprepositional phrase is a group of words that begins with a preposition andends with a noun or pronoun. In, on, for, from of, to, and by are prepositions.)

For example:

Two **girls** on my bowling team **score** over 200

Two **bags** of nonfat potato chips **contain** 440 calories**.**

The verb must still agree with the subject even when it comes before the subject.

For example:

There **are** many talented **musicians** in Montclair.

If you are unsure of the subject, find the verb and then ask “Who?” or “What?”

For example:

Question: “What are there in Montclair?”

Answer: “Many talented musicians.”

The following indefinite pronouns always take singular verbs:

each anyone anybody anything

either everyone everybody everything

neither someone somebody something

one no one nobody nothing

For example:

**Neither** of my friends **has** a great deal of money. (singular subject, singular verb)

**Somebody** **was** at the door. (singular subject, singular verb)

A compound subject (two or more subjects joined by *and)* requires a plural verb.

For example:

**Gerry and Shane** **are** good friends of mine. (compound subject takes a plural verb)

That **cat and dog** **belong** to my neighbor. (compound subject takes a plural verb)

Langan, John and Goldstein, Janet M. *English Brushup.* 4th ed. New

York: McGraw-Hill, 2007. Print.