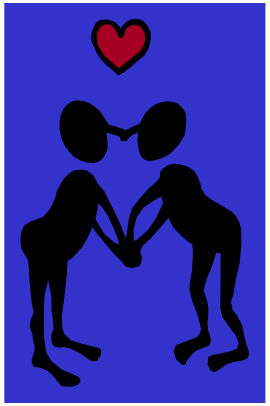
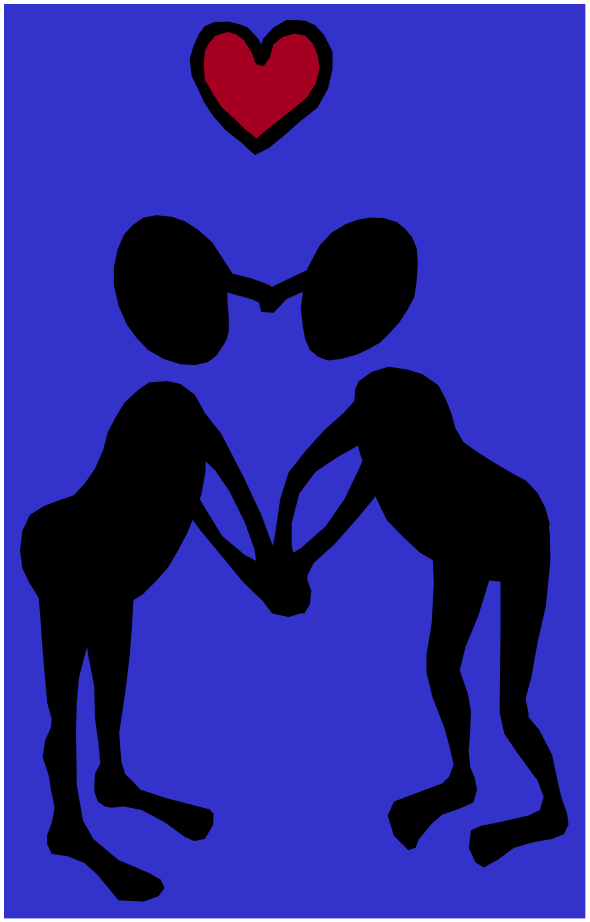
SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT



Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

EVERY VERB MUST AGREE WITH ITS SUBJECT



Singular Subject

Singular Verb

Plural Subject

Plural Verb

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

The Stupidity of English Grammar

- To make a noun plural, we add –**s**
  - Singular: girl
  - Plural: girl**s**
- To make a verb plural, we **take away** the –**s**.
  - Singular: he talk**s**
  - Plural: they talk

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

Watch the Verb Endings!

Singular

- I walk
- You walk
- He/She/It walk s
  - Joe walk s
  - The girl walk s

Plural

- We walk
- You walk
- They walk
  - Joe and Maria walk
  - The girls walk

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

Remember the 3 irregular verbs:

- **DO**

  Singular Plural

  - He does They do

- **HAVE**

  - She has They have

- **BE**

  - He is They are
  - She was They were

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

Tip for Subject/verb Agreement

Generally, if the subject doesn't end in –S, the verb will.

If the subject does end in –S, the verb won't.

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

No –S on subject

-S on verb

The girl dances.

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

-S on subject

The girl<u>s</u> dance.

No –S on verb

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

Compound subjects joined by "and"

- If there are two or more subjects joined by *and*, the subject must be plural, so the verb will not get an "s".

Example

- The boy and the girl dance.

  (= They dance.)

No –S on verb

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

Compound subjects joined by "or"

If there are two or more subjects joined by ***or***, the verb agrees with the part of the subject closest to it.

Examples:

- The professor or the students walk the halls.
- The students or the professor walks the halls.

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

Watch out for “Everybody”

- Everybody **loves** grammar!
- Everybody **understands** subject/verb agreement.

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

Possible Pitfalls

Sometimes, several words come between the subject and the verb.

- The student, though she had lots of problems in other schools, **finds/find (?)** her new class easy.
  - The **student**, **though she had lots of problems in other schools**, **finds** her new class easy.
  - The **student finds** her new class easy.

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

Prepositional phrases

The subject can never be part of a prepositional phrase.

<u>Example</u>

The students **in my class** study / studies hard.

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

Possible Pitfalls

Sometimes, the subject will come **after** the verb, in questions or when sentence begins with ***there***.

Examples

- Why is **he** falling asleep?
- Why are **they** falling asleep?
- There is **no excuse** for such behavior.
- There are **no excuses** for such behavior.

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

Possible Pitfalls

Relative Pronouns (*who/which/that*) can be either singular or plural, depending on the word they refer to.

- The student who work**s** hard will succeed.
- The student**s** who work hard will succeed.

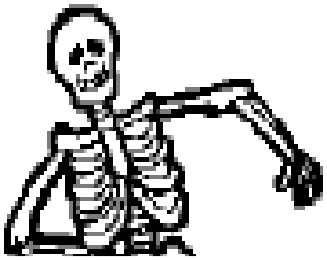
Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

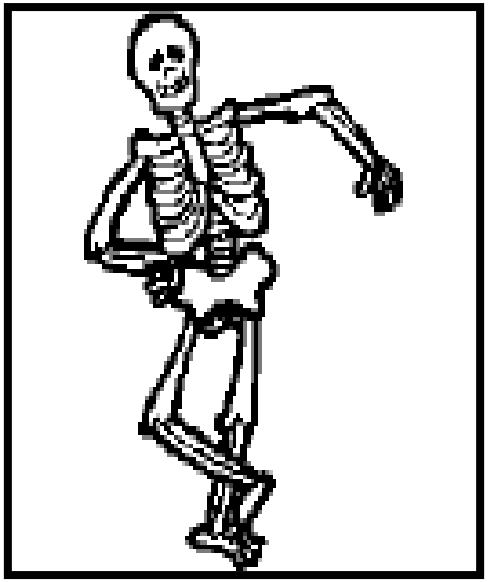
How do I get this right?

- First, identify whether or not you have problems with subject/verb agreement.
- If you don’t have any problems with this, don’t worry about it!
- If you do have problems
  - Identify the verb. Ask who or what is doing it.
  - This will identify the subject.
  - Say them together and make sure that they match in terms of number.

Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com

The subject and verb are the skeleton of every sentence. Make sure you fit those two important parts together correctly!





Downloaded from http://www.tidyforms.com