

Subject-verb agreement

1. The indefinite pronouns *anyone*, *everyone*, *someone*, *no one*, *nobody* are always singular and, therefore, require **singular verbs**.

✘ Everyone have done his or her homework. ✘ Somebody have left her purse.

Some indefinite pronouns — such as *all*, *some* — are singular or plural depending on what they're referring to.

✘ Some of the beads is missing. ✘ Some of the water are gone.

On the other hand, there is one indefinite pronoun, *none*, that can be either singular or plural; (Writers generally think of *none* as meaning *not any* and will choose a plural verb, as in "None of the engines are working." but when something else makes us regard *none* as meaning *not one*, we want a singular verb, as in "None of the food is fresh.")

- ✓ None of you claims responsibility for this incident?
- ✓ None of you claim responsibility for this incident?
- ✓ None of the students have done their homework. (In this last example, the word "their" precludes the use of the singular verb.)

2. **Each** is often followed by a prepositional phrase ending in a plural word (Each of the cars). *Each* is always singular and requires a singular verb.

✘ Everyone have finished his or her homework.
✘ Each of the students are responsible for doing his or her work in the library.

3. Phrases such as *together with*, *as well as*, and *along with* are not the same as *and*.

✘ The mayor as well as his brothers are going to prison.
✘ The mayor and his brothers is going to jail.

4. The pronouns *neither* and *either* are singular and require singular verbs even though they seem to be referring, in a sense, to two things.

✘ Neither of the two traffic lights are working.
✘ Which shirt do you want for Christmas? Either are fine with me.

5. When *nor* or *or* is used the subject closer to the verb determines the number of the verb.

✘ Either my father or my brothers is going to sell the house.
✘ Neither my brothers nor my father are going to sell the house.
✘ Is either my brothers or my father responsible?
✘ Are either my father or my brothers responsible?