

# RULES TO FOLLOW

- **Basic Rule**
- The basic rule states that a singular subject takes a singular verb, while a plural subject takes a plural verb.
- **NOTE:** The trick is in knowing whether the subject is singular or plural. The next trick is recognizing a singular or plural verb.

- **Rule 1**

- Two singular subjects connected by *or* or *nor* require a singular verb.

- **Example:**

*My aunt or my uncle is arriving by train today.*

- **Rule 2**

- Two singular subjects connected by *either/or* or *neither/nor* require a singular verb as in Rule 1.

- **Examples:**

*Neither Jan nor - \*Dariah is available.*

*Either Kiana or Casey is helping today with stage decorations.*

- **Rule 3**

- When *I* is one of the two subjects connected by *either/or* or *neither/nor*, put it second and follow it with the singular verb *am*.

- **Example:**

*Neither she nor I am going to the festival.*

- **Rule 4**

- When a singular subject is connected by *or* or *nor* to a plural subject, put the plural subject last and use a plural verb.

- **Example:**

*The serving bowl or the plates go on that shelf.*

- **Rule 5**
- When a singular and plural subject are connected by *either/or* or *neither/nor*, put the plural subject last and use a plural verb.
- **Example:**  
*Neither Jenny nor the others are available.*

- **Rule 6**

- As a general rule, use a plural verb with two or more subjects when they are connected by *and*.

- **Example:**

*A car and a bike are my means of transportation.*

- **Rule 7**
- Sometimes the subject is separated from the verb by words such as *along with*, *as well as*, *besides*, or *not*. Ignore these expressions when determining whether to use a singular or plural verb.
- **Examples:**
  - The politician, along with the newsmen, is expected shortly.*
  - Excitement, as well as nervousness, is the cause of her shaking.



- **Rule 8**
- The pronouns *each, everyone, every one, everybody, anyone, anybody, someone, and somebody* are singular and require singular verbs. Do not be misled by what follows *of*.
- **Examples:**  
*Each of the girls sings well.*  
*Every one of the cakes is gone.*
- **NOTE:** *Everyone* is one word when it means *everybody*. *Every one* is two words when the meaning is *each one*.

- **Rule 9**

- With words that indicate portions—*percent, fraction, part, majority, some, all, none, remainder*, and so forth —look at the noun in your *of* phrase (object of the preposition) to determine whether to use a singular or plural verb. If the object of the preposition is singular, use a singular verb. If the object of the preposition is plural, use a plural verb.

- **Examples:**

*Fifty percent of the pie has disappeared.*

*Pie is the object of the preposition of.*

*Fifty percent of the pies have disappeared.*

*Pies is the object of the preposition.*

*One-third of the city is unemployed.*

*One-third of the people are unemployed.*

- **NOTE:** Hyphenate all spelled-out fractions.

- *All of the pie is gone.*  
*All of the pies are gone.*  
*Some of the pie is missing.*  
*Some of the pies are missing.*  
*None of the garbage was picked up.*  
*None of the sentences were punctuated  
correctly.*  
*Of all her books, none have sold as well as the  
first one.*

- **Rule 10**

- The expression *the number* is followed by a singular verb while the expression *a number* is followed by a plural verb.

- **Examples:**

*The number* of people we need to hire *is* thirteen.

*A number* of people *have* written in about this subject.

- **Rule 11**

- When *either* and *neither* are subjects, they always take singular verbs.

- **Examples:**

Neither of them is available to speak right now.

Either of us is capable of doing the job.

- **Rule 12**

- The words *here* and *there* have generally been labeled as adverbs even though they indicate place. In sentences beginning with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb.

- **Examples:**

*There are four hurdles to jump.*

*There is a high hurdle to jump.*

- **Rule 13**

- Use a singular verb with sums of money or periods of time.

- **Examples:**

*Ten dollars is a high price to pay.*

*Five years is the maximum sentence for that offense.*

- **Rule 14**

- Sometimes the pronoun *who*, *that*, or *which* is the subject of a verb in the middle of the sentence. The pronouns *who*, *that*, and *which* become singular or plural according to the noun directly in front of them. So, if that noun is singular, use a singular verb. If it is plural, use a plural verb.

- **Examples:**

*Salma is the scientist who writes/write the reports.*

The word in front of *who* is *scientist*, which is singular.

Therefore, use the singular verb *writes*.

*He is one of the men who does/do the work.*

The word in front of *who* is *men*, which is plural. Therefore, use the plural verb *do*.



- **Rule 15**

- Collective nouns such as *team* and *staff* may be either singular or plural depending on their use in the sentence.

- **Examples:**

*The staff is in a meeting.*

*Staff is acting as a unit here.*

*The staff are in disagreement about the findings.*

*The staff are acting as separate individuals in this example.*

The sentence would read even better as:

*The staff members are in disagreement about the findings.*