

# Subject-Verb Agreement B

USAGE

**16a.** A verb should agree in number with its subject.

- (1) Singular subjects take singular verbs.
- (2) Plural subjects take plural verbs.

**SINGULAR SUBJECT AND VERB** An **article** about insecticides **is** in today's paper.

**PLURAL SUBJECT AND VERB** The **players** from Miami **compete** in our league.

(3) The number of a subject usually is not determined by a word in a phrase or clause following the subject.

(4) A negative construction following the subject does not change the number of the subject.

**EXAMPLES** **Danny Glover**, along with Kevin Kline, **appears** in this movie.  
**The coach**, not the team members, **chooses** the captain.

**EXERCISE A** In each of the following sentences, underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

**Example 1.** The front counter, in addition to the tables, (is, are) in need of a good cleaning.

1. The short stories in this collection (*is, are*) mysteries.
2. The star of the play, as well as the chorus members, (*was, were*) rehearsing.
3. Three letters by Thomas Edison (*was, were*) donated to the museum.
4. The daffodils, not the dogwood tree, (*is, are*) in full bloom now.
5. A survey of the voters (*indicates, indicate*) their opinions on the issue.
6. Crushed leaves from the verbena plant (*makes, make*) a flavorful tea.
7. Lake Erie, along with Lake Superior and Lake Huron, (*is, are*) very deep.
8. A tax on both income and property (*was, were*) debated by the city council.
9. Immigrants from China (*was, were*) a major force in the building of the railroad.
10. Several dogs, but not one cat, (*was, were*) inoculated against rabies at the clinic.

**EXERCISE B** Most of the sentences in the following paragraph contain errors in the agreement between subject and verb. Cross out each incorrect verb. Above the error, write the correct form of the verb.

**Example** Ella Fitzgerald, not Janet Jackson or Jewel, <sup>is</sup>~~are~~ my favorite female singer.

The late Ella Fitzgerald, of all American jazz singers, are perhaps the most popular. Her remarkable abilities at improvisation were the source of her worldwide acclaim. Her first recordings of jazz music was made in 1938. Fitzgerald, along with such other African American female singers as Billie Holiday, were at that time the source of fame for Big Bands. Fitzgerald, more than all other singers, have inspired me to pursue a career in music.

# Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement: Number and Gender

**6p.** A pronoun should agree in both number and gender with its antecedent.

(1) Use singular pronouns to refer to singular antecedents. Use plural pronouns to refer to plural antecedents.

**EXAMPLES** Henry Aaron ended **his** remarkable career in baseball in 1976.

The **players** on the field celebrated **their** victory.

(2) Some singular pronouns indicate **gender**—*masculine, feminine, or neuter* (neither masculine nor feminine).

**EXAMPLES** Did Jenny leave **her** basketball in the gym? The **ball** has lost most of **its** air.

**EXERCISE** Circle the antecedent in each sentence, and underline the pronoun in parentheses that agrees with it.

**Example 1.** Where did your brothers buy (his, their) new skis?

- The volleyball players are getting (*her, their*) new jerseys today.
- The maintenance worker swept the surface of the court and then polished (*it, him*).
- When Sandra decided to try out for cheerleader, (*she, it*) began practicing immediately.
- Before practice began, the swimmers talked among (*himself, themselves*).
- The soccer team's bus has messages written in shoe polish on (*their, its*) windows.
- I spoke to Aaron, and (*he, they*) will be happy to be the team's pitcher.
- At the sporting goods store, Megan selected new tennis balls and a hat for (*itself, herself*).
- Leon and Marcos committed (*themselves, himself*) to a daily three-mile run.
- When I saw Oscar and Phina near the soccer field, I called out to (*it, them*).
- After the rock climbers checked the equipment, (*he, they*) began the steep ascent.
- The basketball hoop outside has icicles hanging from (*its, their*) rim.
- When I last saw Katrina, (*they, she*) was over by the batting cages.
- During the game the girls on the other team looked to (*their, her*) coach for direction.
- Centerville High's students have dedicated (*itself, themselves*) to preserving the environment.
- Kyle has made a good reputation for (*itself, himself*) as team captain.
- Eric decided not to play football this year; instead, (*he, they*) will play golf.
- Because the scoreboard wasn't working properly, Mr. Ruiz repaired (*them, it*).
- If you want to borrow Mindy's tennis racket, you'll have to ask (*her, it*) yourself.
- Jamal was proud that (*it, he*) made the tie-breaking point.
- The team's mascot, an articulate parrot, often talks to (*themselves, itself*).