



SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

Usually, a singular subject has a singular verb and a plural subject has a plural verb:



*The tutorial **takes** place on Mondays.*



*The tutorials **take** place in Hunter 113.*



*The government **has lowered** the drinking age.*



*The governments **have discussed** future trade agreements.*

However, some nouns are singular or plural, depending on their meaning. If the word refers to the group as a whole, use a singular verb.



*The team **is** coming first in the competition.*



*Statistics **has** a lecture on Mondays.*

If the word refers to individual members or items, use a plural verb.



*The team **are** all travelling separately.*



*Statistics **have** shown an increase in the number of tertiary graduates over the past decade.*



Related resources:
Checklist of Grammar Problems

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Practice A

Select the correct verb to agree with the subject of the sentence.

1. The committee **has/have** agreed to set aside funds for travel.
2. The committee **has/have** all contributed items for the garage sale.
3. Economics **gives/give** students a grounding in international relations.
4. The economics of podcasting **is/are** delicately balanced.
5. The government **has/have** introduced new legislation.

When there is a phrase between the subject and the verb

Note that phrases between the subject and verb do not affect the agreement:

The treaty *between the two countries* **was** ratified last year.

The members *of the delegation* **were** officially welcomed.

HINT: Cross out the intervening words:

The treaty ~~between the two countries~~ **was** ratified last year.

The members ~~of the delegation~~ **were** officially welcomed.



Practice B

Select the correct verb to agree with the subject of the sentence.

1. Computer programming software developed in partnership with environmental scientists **enables/enable** researchers to study the effects of greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Market predictions for the coming financial year **indicates/indicate** a possible downturn in export growth.
3. A landmark study conducted in the early 1970s **has/have** been used as the basis for all subsequent research into early childhood behaviour.
4. The economic policies of the third Labour government, particularly in relation to welfare spending, **has/have** had a major impact on New Zealand's social development.

5. The benefits of bilingual education **takes/take** several generations to become obvious.

When the Verb Comes Before the Subject

Sometimes the verb comes *before* the subject in a sentence and this can be confusing. There are two main forms of this sentence: sentences or clauses starting with **there** or **here** and those that start with a **preposition**.

Sentences or clauses that start with here or there

From the beginning there **have been** many **interesting options** in Media Studies.



Practice C

Select the correct verb to agree with the subject of the sentence.

1. There **has/have** been an increase in the value of the Kiwi dollar in the past financial year.
2. Here **is/are** several differences in interpretation for you to consider.
3. There **is/are** two major issues that potential investors should consider: outlay and return.
4. Following the initial proposals, there **was/were** considerable opposition to the scheme from both sides.
5. After the ceremonies, there **is/are** usually up to ten days of feasting.