

The background features a black field with several thin, brightly colored lines in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. These lines are scattered across the upper and middle portions of the frame. At the bottom, there is a large, curved area with a blue, fine-lined texture, resembling a stylized horizon or a wave.

CONCORD

INTRODUCTION

The agreement between words in gender, number, case, or person

Examples:

Gender: The **queen** **has** lost **her** crown.

Number: The **shoes** **are** too small.

Person/Pronoun : **I** **am** thankful.

Three principles govern the subject-verb concord

1) GRAMMATICAL CONCORD

- ▶ A singular subject requires a singular verb
e.g. My **son** **watches** television after dinner.
- ▶ A plural subject requires a plural verb
e.g. My **sons** **watch** television after dinner.
- ▶ If the subject is a noun phrase: the number of the verb depends on the number (singular or plural) in the main phrase.
e.g. The **change** in female attitudes **is** most obvious in industry.
The **changes** in female attitudes **are** most obvious in industry.

Three principles govern the subject-verb concord

- ▶ A clause (a clause is a distinct part of a sentence, including a subject and predicate) in the position of subject counts as **singular**. The same case also goes for gerund phrase and to + infinitive phrase:

e.g. **That she was angry** really **bothers** me.

Smoking cigarettes **is** dangerous to your health.

To hand in papers **is** always a good idea for students.

That they should all hand in papers and that the papers should all be so good **was** a big surprise.

What I like most about the house **is** that it's warm.

Three principles govern the subject-verb concord

2) NOTIONAL CONCORD

The agreement of verb with subject according to the idea/notion of number

- ▶ **Collective nouns** . A collective noun is a noun denoting a group or collection of similar individuals considered as one complete whole. It is therefore naturally regarded as being singular and as such takes a singular verb) :

The **committee is** having a meeting.

The **committee consists** of seven members.

The **audience is** enjoying the show.

The **public has** to be served.

But, when the parts or members that compose the thing denoted by the collective noun are thought of individually, a plural verb may be used:

The **committee are** finding it difficult to reach a decision.

Her **family are** coming to dinner.

The **public are** requested not to litter the streets.

Three principles govern the subject-verb concord

- ▶ When necessary, a collective word must be followed by **which** when it is singular, but **who** when it is plural: ‘the board **which is** meeting...’; ‘the orchestra **who are** having coffee.’
- ▶ The nouns *people*, *clergy*, *cattle* are always used with a plural verb:
The **people** of Norway **are** called Norwegians.
Cattle are found crossing the road.
- ▶ *People* is often used as the plural of *person*; it also means “nation”, e.g. The French **people**, the **peoples** of Europe.

Three principles govern the subject-verb concord

3) PRINCIPLE OF PROXIMITY

The agreement of the verb with the noun closest to the verb.

e.g. **No one** except his own **supporters** **agree** with him.

One or **two reasons** **were** suggested.

Nearly **one** out of **three twenty-year-olds** **are** without work.

Can you tell me whether **the hat** or **the gloves** **are** red?

Is the hat or **the gloves** red?

Either **John** or **the girls** **have** to do it.

Either **the girls** or **John** **has** to do it.

Three principles govern the subject-verb concord

- ▶ Measures and partial numbers (fractions, percentages, decimals, etc.) :

Three milligrams of **calcium nitrate** **was** administered.

A quarter of **the vines** **were** destroyed in the fire.

Twenty-five per cent of **the crop** **was** lost.

Half of **the sand** **was** wet.

Half of **the plates** **were** wet.

- ▶ Either or, neither nor: principle of proximity

Either the students or the **teacher** is going to be there.

Either the **teacher** or the **students** are going to be there.

Either **John** or the **girls** **have** to do it.

Either the **girls** or **John** **has** to do it.

Neither **John** nor **Mary** **has** to do it.

Neither **John** nor the **girls** **have** to do it.

Some Additional Points

A. Nominalised adjectives as subjects:

- ▶ abstract non-personal adjective – singular reference
e.g. The **exotic** **fascinates** me.
- ▶ nationality adjective – plural generic reference
e.g. The **Dutch** **are** widely expected to be the first to try.
- ▶ personal adjective – plural reference
e.g. The **poor** **have** to suffer most.
- ▶ **NOTE:** The **accused** = singular or plural
The **insured** = singular or plural
The **deceased** = singular (specific reference)

Some Additional Points

B. Coordinated subjects

- ▶ coordination with **and**

e.g. John **and** Mary **have** gone to town.

Bread **and** butter **are** on my shopping list.

(Two separate items)

BUT : **Law and order is** most important. (Denotes one idea)

Bread and butter is included. (As a single item)

Bed and breakfast costs R180. (One item)

- ▶ NOTE : **Plus** is NOT the equivalent of **and**, it is the equivalent of **with** and is followed by a singular verb:

A man **plus** his wife **has** arrived.

Some Additional Points

C. Coordinative apposition

His son and heir **was** not interested in the business. (Same person)

The secretary and accountant of the company **was** present. (One person doing both jobs)

▶ BUT:

The secretary and the accountant of the company **were** present. (Two persons)

Some Additional Points

D. Quasi-coordinators

- ▶ Complex prepositions such as **'as well as, along with, unlike, rather than'** take a singular verb:

The teacher, **as well as** the students, **was** very tired.

The prime minister, **along with** a number of his advisers, **is** still sceptical of the plan.

The prime minister, **unlike** his advisers, **is** still sceptical of the plan.

D. Indefinite expressions as subject

- ▶ The verb is singular with noncount nouns:
Some of the **water has** leaked out.
- ▶ The verb is plural with count plural nouns:
Some of the **books have** disappeared.

Other Special Cases to Note

- ▶ **A number** of cases **have** been reported. (a number = plural because 'a' is indefinite, i.e. it involves many items.)
- ▶ **The number** of cases **has** increased sharply. (the number = singular because 'the' is definite, i.e. specific)
- ▶ A total = plural: '**A total** of 20 children **were** on the list'.
- ▶ The total = singular: '**The total** number of children on the bus **is** not known'.
- ▶ **Couple**
 1. for people and objects, treat **couple** as plural:
A young **couple** **have** bought the house.
 2. for units of time, treat **couple** as singular:
A **couple of hours** **is** not long'.

Other Special Cases to Note

- ▶ **Majority/minority**

Although **majority** and **minority** are singular words, they represent a number of people and things, and they are usually used with a plural verb:

The **majority** of employees **have** agreed

A **minority** of MECs **have** voted against the motion

- ▶ **Data:** although **data** is the plural of **datum**, it is usual to treat it as a collective singular noun, as in:

All the **data is** available BUT “The **data are** taken from 100 respondents” are also CORRECT.

- ▶ **Graffiti is plural:**

The **graffiti** on the bus **are** difficult to remove.

Other Special Cases to Note

- ▶ **Means:** can be singular or plural.
When the word is used about someone's financial resources, it is plural:
After her divorce her **means are** reduced
- ▶ But as “tool” or “way”, it is singular:
This is the means to an end
- ▶ **Every, each, everybody, neither, either,** take a singular verb:
Every boy in the class **is** present.
Each of the girls **has** received a prize.
Everybody is doing his best.
Neither answer **is** correct.
Either side **represents** a particular symbol.

Other Special Cases to Note

- ▶ **None** can take a singular or plural verb:
None but the brave **deserves** the fair (Dryden)
None of the children in his class **are** bored with the lesson.
I have checked your answers and **none** of them **are** correct.
- ▶ **Both** should be used about **two things** or **people**:
She loves **both cats and dogs**. (Both should be placed directly in front of the word it refers to.)
- ▶ **Both** can be used for 'each': 'There is a florist on **both sides** of the street'.

Other Special Cases to Note

- ▶ **Amounts and measurements**

Three miles is far to walk (single concept of distance)

Ten minutes is all I can give you (length of time)

Ten years is a long time (period of time)

Five thousand bucks is a lot of money (= a sum of money)

- ▶ **One and a half**

When there is 'one and a half ' of anything, the **noun** is in the plural but the **verb** is singular:

One and a half weeks is long enough' (single concept of time)

One and a half litres is all that's left' (single measurement)

Other Special Cases to Note

- ▶ The following groups of words, which formally have a plural ending, are usually treated as a singular concept and noncount with respect to concord:
- ▶ **Games:** draughts/checkers, billiards, bowls, etc.
Bowls is a game mostly played by older people.
- ▶ **Diseases:** measles, mumps, rabies, etc.
Rabies is a dangerous viral disease.

Other Special Cases to Note

- ▶ The following words, although they have a plural ending, can be either singular or plural, depending on the meaning.
- ▶ Subjects and activities ("-ics" words): physics, ethics, linguistics, aerobics, politics, etc. The recommendation is that when:
 - ▶ Economics–
 1. If it refers to an academic theory or refers to the academic subject, it is treated as singular, since it relates to 'the science of economics' (=a single subject):
Economics often **provides** a solution to a political problem'
 2. When it concerns practical applications, it is usually plural:
The economics (=various economic activities) of running a business **are** complicated'.

Other Special Cases to Note

▶ politics –

1. In many contexts, **politics** is treated as singular:

Politics **is** an uncertain business

2. When **politics** represents an attitude or preference of a political party or policy, it is treated as plural:

What **are** his **politics**?

▶ acoustics –

1. When it is a science, it is singular:

Acoustics **is** an interesting subject

2. When it refers to the qualities in a hall it is plural:

The **acoustics** of the new school hall **are** good.

▶ ethics –

1. As a single branch of philosophy, **ethics** is singular;

2. As a quality that someone manifests, or as a code of conduct, it is plural: Their **ethics** **are** different from ours.