

## Module 2: Short Stories

### Topic 6 Content: Subject-Verb Agreement Notes

It is very important to remember that every sentence must have a subject and a predicate. A subject names the person, place, thing, or idea of the sentence. The predicate tells what the subject is, what it does, or what happens to it. The verb is a part of the predicate. Without these two parts, there is no sentence.

Consider the following sentence:

The English teacher wants me to read a story.

In the above example, *teacher* is the simple subject, while *the English teacher* is the complete subject. A simple subject is the key word or words in the subject, and a complete subject includes the simple subject and all its modifiers. A modifier is a word that changes, or supplies more information, about another word. In the example sentence, *teacher* is the subject, but *The* and *English* modify, or change, the subject, providing more information about the subject.

The simple predicate is *wants*, while the complete predicate is *wants me to read a story*. A simple predicate is always a verb or verb phrase, and the complete predicate includes the verb and all of its modifiers. In the two examples shown here, the sentences are split into complete subjects and predicates, with the simple subjects and simple predicates, or verbs, in bold type.

- My friend **Clarice laughs** loudly at my jokes.
- The young **boy stole** a piece of candy.

It is not enough to just make sure to include a subject and verb in every sentence. You need to make sure that the subject and verb agree in terms of person and number. A subject that names one thing is singular. A subject that names more than one thing is plural. This means that if you have a singular noun, you need a singular form of the verb. If you have a plural noun, you need a plural verb.

Look at this chart to see how this general idea is applied with the verb **sleep**. It might seem strange for the third person singular subject to take a verb form with an -s on the end. Please do not let that confuse you.

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup> Person	I sleep	we sleep
2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	you sleep	you (all) sleep
3 <sup>rd</sup> Person	he, she, it sleeps	they sleep

When you are dealing with simple subjects, making the subjects and verbs agree is pretty simple. But, what happens when you have more complex subjects?

When subjects are joined by the conjunction *and*, use a plural verb, as the subject is now plural. For example,

- **Jack and Diane** *walk* to school in the morning.
- **Bees and wasps** *have* stingers.

When two singular subjects are joined by *or* or *nor*, use a singular verb. Remember, when you use *or* or *nor* as a conjunction, you are not combining both subjects into one larger, plural subject. You are saying only one of these subjects will be doing the action of the sentence. Therefore, the subject stays singular, and will then take a singular verb. For example:

- **Laura or Josh** *takes* the lunch orders.
- Neither **Michael nor Brando** *has* a pencil.

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When two plural subjects are joined by *or* or *nor*, use a plural verb. For example:

- **Fruits or vegetables** *come* with lunch.

When a singular subject and plural subject are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject closer to it. For example:

- Neither **the planets nor the moon** *is* visible tonight.
- Neither **the moon nor the planets** *are* visible tonight.

An indefinite pronoun refers to an unspecified person, thing, or amount. Some indefinite pronouns are always singular and take a singular verb. Those indefinite pronouns are shown here.

anybody	anyone	each	either
everybody	everyone	neither	nobody
no one	one	somebody	someone

Other indefinite pronouns are always plural and take a plural verb. Those indefinite pronouns are shown here.

both	few	many	several
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The words *all*, *any*, *most*, and *some* can be either plural or singular. Verb agreement will depend on the word to which they refer. For example:

- **Everyone** *wants* the new game.
- **Both** students *work* nights.

Now, here are two examples using *some*.

- **Some** of the cake *is* gone.
- **Some** of the brownies *were* sold.

In the first example, ‘some’ refers to a portion of the cake, which is singular, so the singular verb is used. In the second example, ‘some’ refers to several brownies, which is plural, so the plural verb is used.