



DOUGLAS COLLEGE

Learning Centre

SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT

Proofreading for Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is an issue that should not concern you while you are writing a paragraph or essay. Instead, you should leave concerns about subject-verb agreement until the editing or proofreading stage of writing. Even good writers have subject-verb agreement problems in their writing. After they have completed a draft, they need to go back and check their writing for subject-verb agreement problems.

Exercise 1: Proofreading for subject-verb agreement errors - sentences

Circle the subjects and underline the verbs. Make an arrow from the verb to its subject. If the sentence has a subject-verb agreement error, cross out the incorrect verb and write the correct verb form above it.

Example:

Everyone are excited about the party.

1. Sara and Desmond is organizing the food.
2. Many of my classmates are arriving early to decorate the party room.
3. The party start at 8:00.
4. Each of us are bringing a small gift that cost less than \$10 for another person.
5. Mike, like many other students, have been trying to decide on the best gift to buy.
6. Mike doesn't want to get something serious; he like to make people laugh.
7. Unfortunately, all the funny things is too expensive.
8. Soo Min is making a cake, and Maria is buying some special chips.

Exercise 2: Proofreading for subject-verb agreement errors - sentences

Circle the subjects and underline the verbs. Make an arrow from the verb to its subject. If the sentence has a subject-verb agreement error, cross out the incorrect verb and write the correct verb form above it.

1. Calcium, which is one of the world's most common elements, are important for growing strong bones and teeth.
2. Every animal requires calcium for its health.
3. Calcium are also used for many other purposes.
4. As far back as Ancient Egyptian times, historians tell us of the use of calcium as a building material.
5. In nature, this important element is always found as a compound such as calcium carbonate and calcium fluoride.
6. Lack of calcium can be a serious problem.
7. Calcium-deficient bones is brittle and breaks easily.
8. Older people, especially older women, frequently gets osteoporosis.
9. Osteoporosis are a condition which cause calcium deficiency in bones.
10. In Canada, one in four women over the age of fifty suffer from osteoporosis.
11. A person with osteoporosis can break a bone doing simple daily activities like walking, hugging or coughing.
12. Each osteoporosis sufferer needs to eat foods high in calcium daily.
13. Milk, tofu and spinach is high in calcium.
14. Regular exercise also help prevent osteoporosis.
15. The other group that need lots of calcium are children who are growing.
16. They need calcium to help their bones and teeth grows strong.

Exercise 3: Proofreading for Subject-verb Agreement Errors - Paragraph

Circle the subjects and underline the verbs. Make an arrow from the verb to its subject. If the sentence has a subject-verb agreement error, cross out the incorrect verb and write the correct verb form above it.

The Columbia Icefield

The Rocky Mountains, on the border of the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, has many attractions for tourists. One attraction is the Columbia Icefield. This huge field of ancient ice cover 125 square kilometers. The Athabasca, Stutfield and Dome glaciers make up the icefield. As the ice melts, the water flow into four major river systems. These systems is the Columbia, Fraser, Mackenzie and Saskatchewan. The meltwater flows down these rivers into three different oceans, the Pacific, Arctic and Atlantic. This high point in a continent's water system is called a "hydrological apex", and the Columbia Icefield is one of only two such apexes in the world. Tourists visit the icefield from April to October each year. Walking tours and snowcoach tours is available. Many people go to the icefield because it is the biggest area of ice and snow in North America south of the Arctic Circle.

Exercise 4: Proofreading for Subject-verb Agreement Errors – Paragraph

Circle the subjects and underline the verbs. Make an arrow from the verb to its subject. If the sentence has a subject-verb agreement error, cross out the incorrect verb and write the correct verb form above it.

The Beaver

The beaver, Canada's national animal, have some unusual characteristics. One unusual fact about beavers is their large size. The beaver is the largest rodent in North America, weighing from 13 to 35 kg. It spend a lot of time in the water, so its feet is large and webbed for swimming. The beaver's tail which is wide and flat like a paddle also helps it to swim. Thick underfur keep the beaver warm and dry, even in very cold water. In fact, beavers have been known to stay under water in icy ponds for as long as fifteen minutes. Beavers also has long teeth which grows all their lives. They use these powerful teeth to cut down trees which they use for food and and shelter. Another unusual fact about the beaver is that it is one of the few animals that change its own environment. Beavers create ponds by building dams with roots, sticks, mud and stones. Each family of beavers build a lodge, or nest, in a riverbank or in the middle of a pond. They build an underwater entrance to the lodge. Having the entrance underwater protects them from their enemies. Beavers is also very social animals. They not only communicate with each other by making sounds with their mouths but also by slapping their big flat tails on the water. The beaver's social life is complex and focus around the female. These very special animals are found in every province in Canada.

Exercise 5: Proofreading your own writing for Subject-verb Agreement Errors

Write a paragraph about one of the following:

- ◆ the habits of you and your friends or family members on weekends
- ◆ the appearance and habits of a wild animal
- ◆ a special place

While writing the paragraph, don't worry about subject-verb agreement. Concentrate on writing an interesting paragraph. When you have finished writing a draft of the paragraph, follow these proofreading steps for subject-verb agreement.

1. Circle the subjects and underline the verbs.
2. Make an arrow from the verb to its subject.
3. If the sentence has a subject-verb agreement error, cross out the incorrect verb and write the correct verb form above it.
4. Highlight any verbs you are not sure of. Discuss these with your tutor.

For more practice with subject-verb agreement, see:

Benson, B. and Byrd, P. (1989) Improving the grammar of written English: the editing process. Boston: Heinle & Heinle. pp. 91, 93, 145.

Langan, J. and Winstanley, S. (1997) Sentence skills: a workbook for writers. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson. pp. 72-79, 271-274.

Lane, J. and Lange, E. (1993). Writing clearly. Boston: Heinle and Heinle. pp. 170-177

SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT – ANSWER KEY**Exercise 1: Proofreading for subject-verb agreement errors - sentences**

1. (Sara and Desmond) ~~is~~ ^{are} organizing the food.
2. (Many) of my classmates are arriving early to decorate the party room.
3. The party ~~start~~ ^{starts} at 8:00.
4. (Each) of us ~~are~~ ^{is} bringing a small gift that ~~cost~~ ^{costs} less than \$10 for another person.
5. (Mike) like many other students, ~~have~~ ^{has} been trying to decide on the best gift to buy.
6. (Mike) ~~doesn't~~ want to get something serious; (he) ~~like~~ ^{likes} to make people laugh.
7. Unfortunately, (all the funny things) ~~is~~ ^{are} too expensive.
- OK 8. Soo Min is making a cake, and Maria is buying some special chips.

Exercise 2: Proofreading for subject-verb agreement errors - sentences

1. (Calcium, which) ~~is~~ ^{is} one of the world's most common elements, ~~are~~ ^{is} important for growing strong bones and teeth.
2. (Every animal) requires calcium for its health.
3. (Calcium) ~~are~~ ^{is} also used for many other purposes.
4. As far back as Ancient Egyptian times, (historians) tell us of the use of calcium as a building material.
5. In nature, (this important element) is always found as a compound such as calcium carbonate and calcium fluoride.
6. (Lack of calcium) can be a serious problem.

7. Calcium-deficient bones ~~is~~ brittle and ~~breaks~~ easily.
8. Older people, especially older women, frequently ~~gets~~ osteoporosis.
9. Osteoporosis ~~are~~ a condition which ~~cause~~ calcium deficiency in bones.
10. In Canada one in four women over the age of fifty ~~suffer~~ from osteoporosis.
11. A person with osteoporosis ~~can break~~ a bone doing simple daily activities like walking, hugging or coughing.
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Exercise 4: Proofreading for Subject-verb Agreement Errors – Paragraph

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