

# Subject-verb agreement



One of these cheeses **is** mild; the others **are** strong.

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## Construction

### Singular noun + singular verb

My son **is** 12 years old.

This box of chocolates **is** expensive.

### Plural noun + plural verb

My colleagues **are** very nice.

The people in the IT team **are** very helpful.

## Nouns that can be singular or plural

For a group or organisation, we can use a singular or plural verb:<?xml:namespace prefix = "o" ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

The IT team **is/ are** based in Lyon.

The government **want/wants** to increase taxes.

Other examples include: audience, class, company, crowd, department, family, population, school and the names of companies or organisations such as the BBC, Apple, the Stock Exchange and the World Health Organisation.

## Nouns ending in 's'

The choice of verb depends on the noun. Here are some examples: <?xml:namespace prefix = "o" ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

|   | Singular verb  | Plural verb  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>A single entity</b>  | <b>Jaws <b>is</b> my favourite film.</b><br><br><b>The United States <b>aims</b> to promote democracy.</b>         |  |
| <b>Nouns that appear to be plural but are not</b>                         | <b>The news <b>wasn't</b> good.</b><br><br><b>Physics <b>includes</b> the study of heat and light. [see below]</b> |  |
| <b>Some names of academic subjects have another, more general meaning</b> | <b>Politics <b>seems</b> to be more popular now.</b><br><br><b>Economics <b>isn't</b> my favourite subject.</b>    | <b>His politics <b>are</b> changing. [political beliefs]</b><br><br><b>The economics of this industry <b>are</b> interesting. [its financial system]</b>   |
| <b>Some have no singular form and always take a plural verb</b>           |  | <b>His clothes <b>are</b> unfashionable.</b><br><br><b>Other examples include:</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <b>shorts</b></li><li>· <b>trousers</b></li><li>· <b>goods</b></li><li>· <b>premises</b></li></ul> |

## Measurements, amounts and quantities

| <?xml:namespace prefix = "o" ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" /> | Singular verb | Plural verb |
|--|---------------|-------------|
|--|---------------|-------------|

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| A singular verb is preferred  | Â€200 <b>isn't</b> enough.                   |   |
|   | I think 75km <b>is</b> too far to travel.    |   |
| With percentages, it depends whether the noun in the sentence is singular or plural | 40% of his <b>time is</b> spent in meetings. | 10% of the <b>employees want</b> to work in a different department. |

## More than one subject

We usually use a plural verb: <?xml:namespace prefix = "o" ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

My sister and I **are** going to Italy next year.

But if we see the items as a single entity, we use a singular verb:

Blackcurrant crumble and ice cream **is** my favourite dessert.

Health and Safety **has** to be a priority.

## 'One of'

'One of' is followed by a plural noun but does not take a plural verb because it refers to 'one of a pair or group':

One of my colleagues **is** sick. ✓

One of my colleagues **are** sick. ✗

See also **Quantifiers** and **plural nouns**.

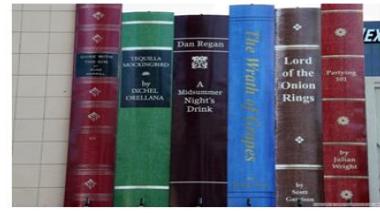
## Examples



The goods **are** loaded onto ships.



My family **like/likes** going to the park.



"**Angels and Demons**" **is** Dan Brown's second novel.



Two hours **wasn't** long enough.



**Moules frites** **is** a popular French dish.



These trousers **are** perfect for the party!



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Last update: **2023/02/14 14:32**

