

Subject-verb agreement

During Chinese New Year, neither John nor Peter gets a haircut. Both of them wear red too!



Grammar in Context

Theme: Cultures—customs

Words by Theme



Read the following text and answer the questions.

UNUSUAL¹ CUSTOMS²

Asking for salt **is** inappropriate³ at the dining table in Egypt. If you do so, **your Egyptian host⁴ is going to be** upset. **Seasoning your dish means** you find the food awful.

In Bali, **teenagers have to** go through a tooth filing ceremony⁵ when they come of age. **A priest files** down their upper canine teeth so that **they are** even with the front teeth. **The aim of the ceremony is** to keep evil forces away⁶.

Fire-walking doesn't only **happen** in films. **It happens** in reality in a few villages in Greece and Bulgaria. After **the villagers dance** around burning coal, **the leader enters** the circle and **walks** among the hot coal. **The rite is** for good health of the villagers.

Most people treat babies with extra love and care. However, in some rural areas⁷ in India, **people throw** babies and young children from heights! **Priests drop** them from temple balconies 30 feet above the ground for good luck. **The family** then **catch** the child with a blanket. Still, **30 feet is** scary enough for grown-ups!



Are the following statements correct? Put a tick (✓) or a cross (X) in each box.

- Both upper canine teeth of the teenagers become flat after the tooth filing ceremony.
- Either the villagers or the leader does the fire-walking.
- In some places in India, when a child falls from a temple, his or her family members catch him or her from below.

PART 1 Person and Number

The verb must agree with the subject in person and number.

Singular	Plural
<i>He is from Class 2D.</i>	<i>The children feel tired after the football match.</i>
<i>Emma enjoys swimming but her dog hates it.</i>	<i>We are designing our dream house.</i>
<i>It has been raining all day.</i>	<i>Isla and Brian have not talked for a week.</i>
<i>I was 158 cm last year.</i>	<i>You were good friends.</i>
<i>She does not leave town during the winter.</i>	<i>They are not revising.</i>
<i>Do you have time after school, Leo?</i>	<i>Do the shops close at 10 pm?</i>



Exercise 1.1

Circle the correct answers for the following sentences.

- Dad usually (has / have) macaroni with cherry tomatoes for lunch.
- Serve the meal when the main dish and the pasta (is / are) ready.
- Mrs White (watch / watches) this longest-running sitcom every night.
- (Am / are) I smart enough to be a lawyer? It (are / is) hard to get into a law school.
- (Do / Does) you know anything unique about Chinese traditions and customs?
- Many people (doesn't like / don't like) a long commute to work.



Exercise 1.2

Joey is reading a blog entry of an international school student. Complete the entry using the correct form of the given verbs.

Lunch dishes from around the world! Posted by Robert on 25 May 20XX

Lunch is never boring for me. My classmates (1) _____ (come) from different countries. We (2) _____ (love) trying new things, and we (3) _____ (mind) tasting unfamiliar cuisines.



Diego, Kim and I (4) _____ (stay) in school for lunch. Diego's father (5) _____ (own) a Mexican restaurant so he always (6) _____ (bring) us extra burritos. Kim (7) _____ (be) Korean. She and her mum sometimes (8) _____ (prepare) _____ kimbap, a type of seaweed rice rolls. I (9) _____ (be) American.

My elder sisters (10) _____ (start) to pack my lunch since March. My packed lunches (11) _____ (be) mostly some leftovers from the dinner of the previous night.

For birthday celebrations, my classmates and I (12) _____ (go) out for lunch. The birthday person (13) _____ (pick) the restaurant. That is another way to discover more new dishes!

PART 2A Singular subjects

Singular subjects take singular verbs.

	Singular subjects	Singular verbs
Singular countable nouns	The flight This supermarket	<i>departs</i> from Singapore at around 6 am. <i>doesn't sell</i> stationery.
Indefinite pronouns (<i>every-, some-, any-, no-</i>)	Everybody No one	<i>has</i> their ups and downs. <i>likes</i> my idea.
Uncountable nouns	Milk The furniture	<i>is</i> an important source of calcium. <i>is</i> new.
Gerunds	Pickpocketing Dancing on chairs	<i>was</i> a common crime in Hong Kong. <i>is</i> dangerous.
Nouns of measurement	Three minutes Two thousand dollars	<i>is</i> a long time to hold your breath. <i>was</i> a lot of money at that time.

PART 2B Plural subjects

Plural subjects take plural verbs.

	Plural subjects	Plural verbs
Plural countable nouns	The students Vegetables	<i>don't like</i> jogging. <i>are</i> rich in nutrients.
<i>the</i> + adjective	The rich The disabled	<i>think</i> differently from the poor. <i>face</i> many challenges.
Two or more subjects	The football team and its fans Both her parents	<i>were</i> excited about their victory. <i>have passed away</i> .

Reminder!



Sometimes, plural nouns take singular verbs because they are a person or a thing as a whole.

- *Is* **bacon and eggs** easy to make? (a dish)
- *The director and actor of the film* **is** talented. (the same person)
- *Their bread and butter* **is** farming. (the source of income)
- *Two and two* **equals** four. (addition)

Some plural proper nouns take singular verbs because they are a person or a thing as a whole.

- *Super Mario Bros* **was** first released in 1985. (a game)
- *The Philippines* **has** many volcanoes. (a country comprising many islands)

Error Diagnosis

Some nouns are always plural. They usually have two parts:

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <i>Is</i> my glasses on the shelf? | ✗ | <i>Are</i> my glasses on the shelf? | ✓ |
| <i>Your jeans</i> looks cool. | ✗ | <i>Your jeans</i> look cool. | ✓ |

Some words ending in *-s* are uncountable nouns and take singular verbs:

- *The news* **is** shocking.
- *Mumps* **was** common until vaccines became routine.





Exercise 2.1

Underline the subjects and the verbs in the sentences. Write *S* for singular and *P* for plural.

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1. <u>Smoking</u> <u>is</u> harmful to your health. | S | 5. The diner and the pub are closing. | |
| 2. The breaking news spreads quickly. | | 6. Fish and chips comes from England. | |
| 3. Nothing is interesting in this town. | | 7. The elderly deserve our respect. | |
| 4. The scissors aren't in the first drawer. | | 8. Purple and pink were my favourite colours. | |



Exercise 2.2

Lisa is reading her chat history with Ivy. Are the underlined words correct? If yes, put a tick (✓). If no, write the correct word(s).

Ivy

Last seen Fri 19:25

Lisa, my favourite jeans (1) doesn't fit any more. I have to go on another diet again.

Dieting (2) are bad for your health.

Someone (3) have tried the new coffee-and-tea diet and lost ten pounds. I have to drink two cups of coffee or tea before meal. Black coffee (4) is even more effective. Five days (5) are enough to see the result.

That (6) doesn't sound right. Both coffee and tea (7) is full of caffeine. Everyone (8) lose weight when they have no sleep!

You're right.

Doris and Candy (9) has lost quite some weight recently. The girls (10) go jogging for an hour every day. No pain, no gain!

1. don't fit
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

PART 3A Collective nouns

Collective nouns can take either singular verbs or plural verbs.

Emphases	Examples
The entire group	<i>The staff is working on a new project.</i> (American English)
Individuals of the group	<i>The staff are happy about the pay rise.</i> (British English)

Other examples of collective nouns: *class, family, group, team* and *audience*

PART 3B *along with, as well as and together with*

Expressions such as *along with* and *as well as* are not coordinating conjunctions. The noun phrase that follows the expressions is not part of the subject.

Separated subjects and verbs	Subjects linked by <i>and</i>
<i>The shepherd, along with his sheep, is walking up the hill.</i>	<i>The shepherd and his sheep are walking up the hill.</i>
<i>Norris, as well as his brothers, is good at Maths.</i>	<i>Norris and his brothers are good at Maths.</i>
<i>A bottle of wine, together with some chocolates, makes a nice present.</i>	<i>A bottle of wine and some chocolates make a nice present.</i>

PART 3C *or, either ... or, neither ... nor and there ... and*

The verb form matches the item next to it.

▪ <i>An air fryer or <u>an oven</u> is what we need for our kitchen.</i>	▪ <i>A drumstick or <u>two chicken wings</u> are great snacks.</i>
▪ <i><u>Either the rabbits or the turtle</u> is eating the leaves.</i>	▪ <i><u>Either my wife or my sisters</u> are going to help me.</i>
▪ <i><u>Neither tomatoes nor broccoli</u> is available.</i>	▪ <i><u>Neither Mr Wong nor his brothers</u> live here.</i>
▪ <i>There was <u>a book and two pens</u> on my desk.</i>	▪ <i>There were <u>two pens and a book</u> on my desk.</i>

PART 3D *either, neither and none*

Either (of ...), neither (of ...) and none of ... often take singular verbs.

Situations	Examples
Formal communication: + singular verb ✓ + plural verb ✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Either design looks good.</i> ▪ <i>Does either of you have a phone charger?</i> ▪ <i>Neither answer is correct.</i> ▪ <i>Neither of the answers is correct.</i> ▪ <i>None of these is true.</i> ▪ <i>None of us believes this.</i>
Informal usage: + singular verb ✓ + plural verb ✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Either of them is / are alright.</i> ▪ <i>Neither of them wins / win.</i> ▪ <i>None of my kids knows / know how to cook.</i>

PART 3E *one*

The following expressions take singular verbs.

Rules	Examples
<i>each</i> + singular noun + singular verb	▪ <i>Each girl has her own locker.</i>
<i>each of</i> + plural noun + singular verb	▪ <i>Each of the boys has received a present.</i>
<i>one of</i> + plural noun + singular verb	▪ <i>One of my friends plays the piano.</i>
<p>⚠ Be careful with expressions with <i>one</i>. Even if the noun is plural, it still takes a singular verb. <i>More than one of us knows the secret.</i></p>	

Reminder!

The verb agrees with the head noun (the original noun).

- Three pieces of paper **are** blank.
- The price of these cars **is** high.
- The novel written by John Green **sells** very well.
- The chocolates I bought at the airport **have** expired.



Exercise 3.1

Fill in the blanks using the correct form of the given verbs.

1. Anson, as well as his colleagues, _____ goes _____ (go) to work by bus.
2. Oh no! The luggage on the trolley _____ (be) missing!
3. Neither of the teams _____ (have) a team uniform. The coaches are working on it.
4. One of the passengers _____ (sleep) when the accident happened.
5. Neither Calvin nor his brothers _____ (lie) in bed at the moment.
6. The jacket, along with the socks, _____ (be) currently on sale.
7. The previous owner of these shops _____ (retire) since 2018.
8. Either explanation _____ (be) possible. We need more proof.
9. The flowers that my grandma grows _____ (smell) amazing.
10. A cup of ice cream with three flavours _____ (cost) only \$50. It is really good value!



Exercise 3.2

Chara is editing her speech on a traditional Indian clothing item. Complete the speech by circling the best answers.

What do Women in India Wear?

Saris **(1)** (is / are) the traditional costume of India. For centuries, the costume **(2)** (have been / has been) well-loved by women in India and its neighbouring countries. The fabric of saris **(3)** (is / are) up to nine metres long. Nine metres **(4)** (is / are) vast for a single piece of garment!

Usually, either cotton or silk **(5)** (is / are) used to make saris. The beautiful design along with bright colours **(6)** (make / makes) a sari elegant and eye-catching. Indian women **(7)** (arrange / arranges) saris in different ways. The sari **(8)** (is / are) simple yet versatile.

My family **(9)** (follow / follows) Indian tradition closely. My mother is a big fan of saris. Most of her saris **(10)** (come / comes) with gold patterns. Yet, each of them **(11)** (look / looks) different. The length of saris **(12)** (allow / allows) endless creative design ideas.



More to take away

versatile (adj.) = able to be used for many different purposes

Grammar Wrap-up

Chloe is writing a letter of complaint to a restaurant. Complete the letter using the correct form of the given verbs.

Dear Sir / Madam,

Complaint about unsatisfactory food and service

I visited Chan and Sons for lunch on 3 September 20XX. However, eating at your restaurant

(1) _____ was _____ (be) a disappointing experience.

Chan and Sons (2) _____ (claim) to be a five-star

Chinese restaurant serving traditional dim sum. Unfortunately, the

dim sum I ordered (3) _____ (be not) authentic.

For traditional steamed dumplings, both pork and shrimps

(4) _____ (be) the main ingredients. However,

neither (5) _____ (be) in the ones I ate at your

restaurant. Instead, sausage slices (6) _____ (be)

in those dumplings! Worse still, more than one of the dishes

(7) _____ (be not) fully cooked. There was

half-cooked meat in the barbeque pork buns and the fried noodles!



Besides, your staff (8) _____ (be) rude. One of the waiting staff

(9) _____ (shout) at an old lady when I arrived. This is truly unacceptable. Many of

your regular customers (10) _____ (be) old people. The elderly actually

(11) _____ (need) more attention and care from your staff. On that busy Sunday,

there (12) _____ (be) only two managers in such a large restaurant. Yet, neither the

old manager nor the young manager (13) _____ (be) attentive enough. Both

(14) _____ (look) at their phones when I tried to get their attention.

The service of your restaurant, along with the food quality, (15) _____ (be) poor, but

the prices of your dishes (16) _____ (be) shockingly high. One hundred and twenty

dollars (17) _____ (be) too much for a dish of steamed dumplings.

I would like to ask for a full refund and an apology. I hope your restaurant will improve your food quality and service in the near future.

Yours faithfully,

Chloe Yau



Grammar in Pre-DSE Text Type

Theme: Cultures—fashion

You are writing a survey report. Complete the report by circling the best answers.

Words by
Theme



Survey Report on Fashion Preferences¹

During our school's Fashion Week, we have conducted a class survey on fashion preferences. 33 students of Class 3B have completed and returned the questionnaire.

The (1) loves fashion. All of them (2) more than 50% of their pocket money on clothes. Hipsters² (3) the favourite brand³ for our male classmates, whereas Chic⁴ & Co. (4) our female classmates' most-loved brand.



Streetwear and athleisure⁵ (5) the most popular fashion styles. Most classmates (6) that either style (7) easy to mix and match. Every classmate (8) at least one pair of boots. Surprisingly, none of them (9) wearing jeans.

Both necklaces⁶ and caps (10) common accessories⁷ among our classmates. Sunglasses (11) the least popular items. Lastly, friendship bracelets⁸ (12) a new trend⁹ among our female classmates.



- (1) A. classes
 B. class
 C. student
 D. students

- (2) A. spends
 B. spend
 C. has spent
 D. is spending

- (3) A. is
 B. are
 C. have been
 D. was

- (4) A. is
 B. are
 C. has been
 D. were

- (5) A. is
 B. are
 C. are being
 D. were

- (6) A. expresses
 B. express
 C. thinks
 D. think

- (7) A. is
 B. are
 C. were
 D. has been

- (8) A. has
 B. have
 C. is
 D. are

- (9) A. is liking
 B. has liked
 C. liking
 D. likes

- (10) A. is
 B. are
 C. are being
 D. were

- (11) A. is
 B. are
 C. have been
 D. was

- (12) A. have become
 B. has become
 C. has been
 D. have been

We use various types of subjects in clauses or sentences. The verb must agree with the subject. The nature of the subject determines whether the verb should be singular or plural.

- The design of the products **looks** trendy. (singular subject + singular verb)
- All products **were** expensive last year. (plural subject + plural verb)
- Having regular meals **is** beneficial to your digestion. (gerund + singular verb)
- Neither Matt nor Dean **goes** jogging daily. (subject next to the verb + singular / plural verb)

Version 1

Alison has written a magazine article based on research. Read the article. There is ONE mistake in each underlined sentence.

Which type of video game do you like the most?

(1) Do your favourite online game say something about you? (2) Recent research has found that playing video games help develop various skill sets.

Role-Playing Games (RPG)

RPG players can acquire different important skills. (3) Making wise decisions for the character require a lot of thinking. Each tactic used will affect the outcome. (4) Sometimes, the game stalls and take ages to load. Players thus need to be patient to complete a mission. Also, they have to find ways to pass a level. (5) The mission, as well as the interaction and character development, encourage creativity.



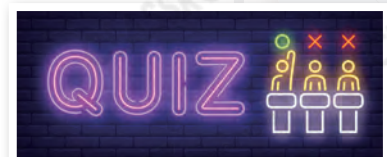
Detective Games

How do you trace the crime gun? (6) Is the scissors a murder weapon? Gamers unlock the mystery piece by piece with their reasoning and problem-solving skills. Most of the games involve interviewing suspects, gathering information and exploring a variety of locations.



Quiz Games

(7) Trivia Questions are a popular quiz game. (8) Either gender enjoy playing it. (9) A series of questions are prepared to test gamers' knowledge and skills. The fast-paced game is fun because of the thrill obtained by giving correct answers to lesser-known facts.



Version 2

Correct the underlined sentences in Version 1.

Which type of video game do you like the most?

(1) Does your favourite online game say something about you ? (2) _____

Role-Playing Games (RPG)

RPG players can acquire different important skills. (3) _____

Each tactic used will affect the outcome. (4) _____

_____. Players thus need to be patient to complete a

mission. Also, they have to find new ways to pass a level. (5) _____

Detective Games

How do you trace the crime gun? (6) _____

_____? Gamers unlock the mystery piece by piece with their

reasoning and problem-solving skills. Most of the games involve interviewing suspects, gathering information and exploring a variety of locations.

Quiz Games



(7) _____

(8) _____

(9) _____. The fast-paced game is fun because of the thrill obtained by giving correct answers to lesser-known facts.



Brain Breaks

Fun trivia questions about food and drinks:

① What are the three most popular drinks in the world?

② What food lasts forever?

honey ⑦

Answers: ① water, tea and beer