

Subject-Verb Agreement



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Verbs change form depending on who performs the action.

Each different subject requires the verb form that corresponds with it. English verb forms usually don't vary much across subjects. See for instance, a couple of simple verbs like "to speak" and "to eat":

| Subject | To speak | To eat |
|-----------|----------|--------|
| I | speak | eat |
| you | speak | eat |
| he/she/it | speaks | eats |
| we | speak | eat |
| they | speak | eat |

Luckily, English subject-verb conjugations are pretty simple for most verbs: the regular rule is that everything but the he/she/it form just looks like the standard verb, and he/she/it is just the verb with an -s at the end.

It's always important to **make sure that your verbs are agreeing with their subjects**—to make sure that the actions are paired with the right actors in your sentence.

Examples:

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare **creates** tension using dramatic irony.

Both protagonists **die** as a result of Romeo not realizing Juliet's scheme, which the audience is fully aware of.

Use of dramatic irony like this **shows up** in many of Shakespeare's plays and always heightens the tension as the play approaches its climax.

Be sure not to conjugate the verb to match the **wrong noun** in your sentence! For example, take a look at the two versions of the following sentence:

The problem with the name of the group of ten girls **are** that nobody can agree on one.

The problem with the name of the group of ten girls **is** that nobody can agree on one.

Actor: the problem. Action: being that nobody agrees.

Since the actor is the singular "problem," it's the equivalent of he/she/it—and so the verb form that corresponds will be the singular, "is."