**Questions & Answers: Subject-Verb Agreement**

**1. What does agreement mean?**

In regards to subject-verb agreement, the word “agreement” means that the subject and the verb are the same

in number.

**Example**: The cat chases the rat. (singular)

The cats chase the rat. (plural)

**2. What does singular mean?**

Singular means one.

**3. What does plural mean?**

Plural means two or more.

**4. What is the rule about singular subjects?**

Singular subjects take singular verbs.

**5. What is the rule about plural subjects?**

Plural subjects take plural verbs.

**6. What is the clue that a verb is singular?**

If the verb ends with an "s," the verb is usually singular.

**7. What is the clue that a verb is plural?**

If the verb does NOT end with an "s," the verb is usually plural.

**8. What are the two EXCEPTIONS to the singular subject / singular verb rule?**

The two EXCEPTIONS to the singular subject / singular verb rule are the pronouns "I" and "you."

[Remember Barney, the dinosaur, who says, "I *love* you, you *love* me."]

**Rule #1: Subject and Verb Separated with a Clause or Phrase**

**9. What may distract the reader when applying the subject-verb separated rule?**

(**Example**: The cats playing under the Christmas tree (knocks, knock) off ornaments and tear wrapping

paper.) An interrupter, such as an essential/nonessential participial or clause and/or a prepositional phrase

(see list in notes) may distract the reader.

**Rule #2: Compound Subjects**

**10. If two subjects are joined with "and," you will need a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ verb in most situations.**

If two subjects are joined with "and," you will need a PLURAL verb in most situations.

**Example**: Sarah and Hannah (likes, like) Jacob better than Edward.

**11. What are the three EXCEPTIONS to the compound subjects joined with "and" rule?**

The three EXCEPTIONS to the compound subjects joined with "and" rule are

1. When the compound subject joined with "and" is preceded by "each," "every," "no," "nothing," or

"many a," the subject is considered singular, so a singular verb is needed.

1. When the compound subject joined with "and" refers to a single thing (such as food or music), the

subject is considered singular, so a singular verb is needed.

1. When the compound subject joined with "and" is followed by "each," the subject is considered plural,

so a plural verb is needed.

**12. When does the compound subject agree with the subject closer to the verb?**

If the compound subject is joined by "neither...nor...." or "either...or..." or “not only...but also..." the verb

agrees with the subject closer to the verb.

**Rule #3: Indefinite Pronouns**

**13. What are the 20 singular indefinite pronouns?**

(1) anybody (13-14) another / other

(2) anyone (15-16) either / neither

(3) anything (17-18) little / much

(4) everybody (19) each

(5) everyone (20) one

(6) everything

(7) nobody

(8) no one

(9) nothing

(10) somebody

(11) someone

(12) something

**14. What are the 5 indefinite pronouns that are ALWAYS PLURAL?**

The 5 indefinite pronouns that are ALWAYS PLURAL are (Both friends sat on mats.--memory trick)

*both, few, several, others, many*

**15. What are the 7 indefinite pronouns that are Wishy-washy (may be both singular and plural**

**depending on how they are used)?**

The 7 indefinite pronouns that are wishy-washy are *all, most, any, none, some, more, enough*

**16. What is the ONLY time you need to look inside a prepositional phrase to determine if your subject is**

**singular or plural?**

The only time you need to look inside a prepositional phrase to determine if your subject is singular or

plural is when the subject of your sentence is a wishy-washy indefinite pronoun (*all, most, any, none, some,*

*more, enough).*

**17. Collective nouns can take a singular or a plural verb. How do you decide which verb is needed?**

If the collective noun is acting as one group, you need a singular verb. But if the collective noun is acting

as individual members of the group, you need a plural verb.

**18. What two clues (besides the above rule) will help you decide which verb is needed?**

(1) the meaning of the sentence

(2) the use of personal pronouns to replace the collective noun

**19. When does a plural noun take a singular verb?**

If the noun ends in "ics," like mathematics, civics, economics

If the noun is a disease, like mumps, measles, AIDS

If the noun is a form of media, like sports and news

If the noun is a game, like Checkers, Dominoes, Chess

**20. When does a plural noun take a plural verb?**

If the noun is a article of clothing, like pants, jeans, slacks, pajamas, gloves

If the noun is a corrective device, like glasses and braces

If the noun is a tool, like shears, binoculars, tweezers, scissors

If the noun is the word "Thanks" or "Congratulations"

**21. When does a plural noun such as glasses, require a singular verb?**

If the plural noun is preceded by the phrase "a pair of"

**22. Individual titles of books, plays, poems, and movies require a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ verb.**

Individual titles of books, plays, poems, and movies require a singular verb.

**Example**: *Romeo and Juliet*, not *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is a tragedy.

**23. Words stating amounts are USUALLY singular; however, sometimes the amount requires**

**a plural verb. How can you tell which verb is needed for words stating amounts?**

**Example**: Five students have eaten the peanut butter pie; one-half of the students are now sick at their

stomachs.

When the subject is a whole number, ask yourself if it is referring to one amount/price. If

so, you need a singular verb. When the subject is a whole number referring to individual

parts / pieces of the amount, you need a plural verb.

If the subject is a fraction (or percentage) the subject depends on the noun that ends the

prepositional phrases.

**24. What is a predicate nominative?**

A predicate nominative is a NOUN FOLLOWING a LINKING VERB; it renames or

identifies the subject of the sentence.

**25. How can you recognize a linking verb?**

**Example**: Mr. *Goins* is the *principal* of North Surry High School.

The *principal* of North Surry High School is *Mr. Goins*.

Mr. Goins = principal Principal = Mr. Goins

If you can flip flop the subject with the predicate nominative, you have a linking verb.

**26. What are the three times a subject may come after the verb, rather than before the verb**

**like it usually does?**

1) If your sentence is a QUESTIONS, the subject comes after the verb or between two verbs.

2) If your sentence begins with There, Where, How (question words), your subject comes after or between

two verbs.

3) If your sentence begins with a succession of prepositional phrases immediately followed by a verb, the

subject comes after the verb (**example**: At the bottom of my bookbag is the lost homework.