

How to

...make a subject and verb agree

When you are at work, you'll probably be expected to use a more formal style of English than you would when you're talking to friends or family.

If the subject of the sentence is just one person, place or thing (singular), then the verb should also be singular. Take a look at these examples.

David **is** the manager. David and Sonia **have** large offices.

singular subject plural subject

		TO BE				TO HAVE		
	TENSE	Present	Future	Past		Present	Future	Past
singular	I	am	shall be	was		have	shall have	had
	you	are	will be	were		have	will have	had
	he, she, it	is	will be	was		has	will have	had
plural	we	are	shall be	were		have	shall have	had
	you	are	will be	were		have	will have	had
	they	are	will be	were		have	will have	had

Try this!

Write the correct verbs into the table:

		TO LEAVE				TO WRITE		
	TENSE	Present	Future	Past		Present	Future	Past
singular	I	leave	shall leave	left				
	you	leave	will leave					
	he, she, it	leaves						
plural	we							
	you							
	they							

Try this!

Add either 'were' or 'was' to the following sentences:

1. We _____ going to the office party that night.
2. What _____ you thinking about?
3. How _____ you going to get there?
4. Steve _____ going to tell you about the new job.

Add a verb to complete the sentence:

1. My colleagues _____ in the meeting.
2. The office supervisor _____ taken a break.
3. The cabinets _____ full.
4. The coffee machine _____ empty.

Try this!

Underline each verb that does not agree with its subject. Draw a line to connect the verb to its subject.

The modern office is supposed to be moving towards being 'paperless'. International management consultants has forecast that use of paper is set to double by 2010. A single office worker, on average, file 2000 pages of hard copy every year. This lead to storage problems and mounting costs. The storage of paperwork have a huge impact on any business. Effective document management is essential. It can saves on time, space and money, yet few companies sees it as a priority.

Some words can be confusing because it is difficult to tell whether they are singular or plural.

Anyone, everyone, someone, no one, nobody

are always singular and, therefore, require singular verbs.

Is anyone at the door? No, everyone is here.

Nobody was at the meeting.

Try this!

Go to this website, which has some more examples and three quizzes:

http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/sv_agr.htm

VERBS

PRESENT TENSE

The learner completes his portfolio.

The trainee is completing his portfolio.

PAST TENSE

The trainee completed his portfolio.

The trainee was completing his portfolio.

FUTURE TENSE

The trainee will complete his portfolio.

The trainee will be completing his portfolio.