

VERB AGREEMENT

The word before the verb is not always its subject. Look for *who* or *what* is doing the action.

- Two singular subjects joined by *and* (for example, the bird and the bee) make a plural and need a plural verb.

The bird and the bee make music together.
My great aunt and my grandfather argue incessantly.
- Sometimes an insertion or phrase separates the subject and verb.

The drummer, not the other musicians, sets the rhythm.
Two causes for the collapse of their business were employee apathy and management dishonesty.
- Sometimes an *of* phrase separates the subject and verb; read the sentence without the *of* phrase.

One of the guests was a sleepwalker.
Each of us owns a Wurlitzer jukebox.
The use of legal drugs has escalated.
- The subject of the sentence follows *there was, there were, there is, there are*.

There was one reason for the cover-up.
There were three reasons for the cover-up.
- Words with *one* and *body* are singular.

Everyone except for the twins was laughing.
Somebody always overheats the copying machine.
- Sometimes a group can be singular.

My family does not eat crowder peas.
In some states the jury elects the spokesperson.
A thousand dollars is a lot of money to carry around.

- When *or* or *nor* joins two subjects, the subject that is nearer to the verb agrees with it.

The attorney or her legal assistants are responsible for the documents.

Neither the actors nor the director was satisfied with the scene.

- *-ing* phrases are usually singular.

Dating two people is tricky.