

## Lesson 2: Subject-Verb Agreement

### □ Getting Started

Today you will start reviewing some words that often cause confusion. You'll also review how to make sure that subjects and verbs agree, especially in cases where the subject and verb are separated or the subject is an indefinite pronoun.

### Stuff You Need

- ✓ *The Only Grammar & Style Workbook You'll Ever Need* by Susan Thurman
- ✓ *The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need* by Susan Thurman

### Ideas to Think About

- How can understanding grammar improve your writing?
- Why do subject-verb agreement errors sometimes occur?

### Things to Know

- If a subject and verb are separated by one or more prepositional phrases or adjective clauses, pretend those phrases or clauses aren't there and try to match the subject and verb.
- The subject of a verb is never located in a prepositional phrase.
- These indefinite pronouns are always singular: all that begin in "some," "no," or "any" and end in "-thing," "-body," or "-one" (like anything, somebody, or everyone), each, either, neither, other, another, much.
- The indefinite pronouns *both*, *few*, *many*, and *several* are always plural.
- These pronouns can be either singular or plural: *all*, *any*, *most*, *none*, and *some*. Look at the prepositional phrase that follows the word to determine whether the word the pronoun refers to is singular or plural.
- Compound subjects joined by "and" take a plural verb. For subjects joined by "or" or "nor," use the subject closest to the verb to match to the verb.

### Activities

#### □ Activity 1: Commonly Confused Words, Set I

Starting today, most lessons will include a review of some words that are often confused due to similar sound, spelling, or both. In each case, you'll review four to five groups of words and read additional tips or examples in the lesson. Then you'll decide which tips,

examples, or definitions are most helpful for you and record them on the "Commonly Confused Words" activity pages. Copying notes is a great way to reinforce information, and the pages will serve as a handy resource for you to review all of the commonly confused words you'll review in this unit.

Today you'll do the following:

1. Read about the first five groups of words on pp. 6-7 of the book (a/an, a lot/alot/allot, accept/except, adapt/adopt, advice/advise).
2. Read the additional tips and information in the lesson.
3. Record notes, examples, etc. in Set I of the first "Commonly Confused Words" activity page.
4. Check your understanding by completing p. 13 in the workbook. Use a pencil to circle the correct answer and then use the Answer Key at the bottom of the page to check your work.
5. If you missed any workbook questions, go back and review the rules for that group of words.

Here are some additional tips for some of the word groups:

**a/an:** Remember to say the noun aloud. Nouns that start with a consonant SOUND use "a" while those that start with a vowel SOUND use "an." Can you have "an historic event"? No, you can't.

**a lot/alot/allot:** If you have a good spell checker, it will immediately separate "alot" into "a lot." Yet you still see "alot" on social media, well, a lot. Blogger and comic writer Allie Brosh came up with a creature called the "alot" to help her deal with people incorrectly using "a lot." You may find her blog post entertaining. (Note that adding an extra "l" to "alot" creates a valid word that your spell checker won't catch. Remember that "allot" means "to divide or distribute by share or portion.")

**The Alot is Better Than You at Everything**

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**accept/except and adapt/adopt:** The confusion with these words occurs because they sound similar (and some people may pronounce them exactly the same). Seeing the

words written may help you decide which one to use.

**advice/advise:** Be sure you know the difference in these words' pronunciations. "Advise" is pronounced as if it were spelled "advize."

### □ Activity 2: Subject-Verb Agreement

You probably don't have trouble with sentences like "I were fast." or "They has a problem." Yet subjects and verbs not agreeing with each other is a common problem. The biggest problems occur in the following cases:

- when the subject and verb are separated (usually by one or more prepositional phrases or the sentence order is different than normal) *The man in the black boots is my uncle.* (the subject and verb are separated by the prepositional phrase "in the black boots")
- the subject is an indefinite pronoun (like *everyone, anything, somebody*)
- there is a compound subject (two subjects joined by a coordinating conjunction) *My neighbor and her mother are from Sweden.*

Here are some details about each of these cases.

### Pesky Prepositional Phrases and Confounding Clauses

If one or more prepositional phrases occur between a subject and verb, to make sure that the subject and verb agree, use a pencil to cross out the phrase(s) or cover them with a finger. Here's an example:

*The subject of the investigations is/are my neighbors.*

Since "investigations" is right beside the verb, it sounds like "are" is correct. Cross out the prepositional phrase "of the investigations," and you'll see that the subject is "subject," whose verb should be "is." Remember that the subject of a verb is never located in a prepositional phrase.

Prepositions
<a href="http://www.movingbeyondthepage.com/link/4920/">www.movingbeyondthepage.com/link/4920/</a>
If you need a review on what prepositional phrases look like, this webpage may be useful.

Similarly, sometimes adjective clauses (beginning with who, that, or which) come

between the subject and verb. As with prepositional phrases, using a pencil to cross them out or a finger to cover them up can help you isolate the subject and verb to confirm they agree:

*A babysitter who is patient with those screaming toddlers deserves/deserve respect.*

Again, since "toddlers" is beside the verb, it may sound like "deserve" is correct. If you cover up "who is patient with those screaming toddlers," the correct subject and verb — "babysitter deserves" — is clear.

### Is This Pronoun Singular or Plural? It's Indefinite.

Indefinite pronouns are usually singular, even if they seem to refer to more than one person or thing (like "everyone" or "much"). Some indefinite pronouns are always plural, and others depend on the situation. Here's a summary:

- The following indefinite pronouns are always singular: all that begin in "some," "no," or "any" and end in "-thing," "-body," or "-one" (such as anything, somebody, or everyone), each, either, neither, other, another, much.
- The indefinite pronouns *both*, *few*, *many*, and *several* are always plural.
- These pronouns can be either singular or plural — *all*, *any*, *most*, *none*, and *some*. Look at the prepositional phrase that follows the word to determine whether the word the pronoun refers to is singular or plural. For example, in "most of the cereal" "most" refers to "cereal," which is singular, but in "most of the students," "most" refers to "students," which is plural. So you'd say, "Most of the cereal is gone," but "Most of the students are here."

### A Compounding Problem

A compound subject is two (or more) subjects joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, or, neither, nor). Subjects joined together by "and" always take a plural verb. For subjects joined together by or, neither, or nor, choose the subject closest to the verb to match to the verb. For example, "Neither Bob nor I have the answer," but "Neither Bob nor Joe has the answer."

To review these situations as well as a few other special cases, read pp. 46-52 in *The*

*Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need*. Be sure to write down in your journal any rules you weren't aware of.

**Subject-Verb Agreement**

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This page explores subject-verb agreement in even more detail. Reading over this page may help your understanding of this topic. There is a link to a related exercise after each section. You may want to try some of these exercises. When you click the "Check My Work" button, the answer key provides the correct answer as well as a brief explanation of the answer.

The following activity has two options to practice understanding subject-verb agreement. Ask which of the following options to complete.

Option 1

Complete #1-5 on pp. 152-155 of *The Only Grammar & Style Workbook You'll Ever Need*. Check your answers using the Answer Key found at the bottom of each page. If you miss any questions, review the page numbers mentioned in the directions for that page.

Option 2

Create a short quiz of at least 5 sentences that would test someone's knowledge of subject-verb agreement. Use the following online quiz creator (or a similar online tool) to create your quiz. Ask a friend or sibling to take the quiz and see how he or she does. Ask if the explanations were helpful for any questions your test-taker may have missed.

Here's a sample. Which of the following sentences is correct?

1. Everyone who believes in rainbows and unicorns are welcome to attend the party.
2. Everyone who believes in rainbows and unicorns is welcome to attend the party.

Explanation: #2 is correct because the subject "everyone" is an indefinite pronoun that is always singular.

### Quiz Maker

[www.movingbeyondthepage.com/link/4922/](http://www.movingbeyondthepage.com/link/4922/)

Choose the Trivia/Marked mode for your quiz. To include a question about which verb is correct in a sentence, choose a multiple choice question and put something like "Which of the following sentences is correct?" as the question and the two versions of the sentence (one with the correct verb and one with the incorrect verb) as answers. You can use examples in the book or workbook for inspiration.

### Wrapping Up

In the next lesson, you'll continue looking at sentence parts that sometimes have problems agreeing. Like subjects and verbs, pronouns often present agreement problems — agreeing with the person or thing they're supposed to refer to or appearing in the correct form depending on their function in a sentence.

### Homework

For homework, you will cover the next set of commonly confused words. Do the following:

1. Read about the next five groups of words on pp. 7-8 of the book (affect/effect, aggravate/annoy, aid/aide, all ready/already, all right/alright).
2. Read the additional tips that follow.
3. Record notes, examples, etc. in Set II of the second "Commonly Confused Words" activity page.
4. Check your understanding by completing p. 14 in the workbook. Use a pencil to circle the correct answer and then use the answer key at the bottom of the page to check your work.
5. If you missed any workbook exercises, go back and review the rules for that group of words.

Here are some additional tips for affect/effect:

**affect/effect:** Note that the book is incorrect about the pronunciation of "affect" — its accent is on the second syllable, not the first. The two words sound very similar. Here's a tip that may help you understand the difference between the two, though. Think of a haven, a safe place:

**How to tell the difference:**

**Affect** is a

**Verb;**

**Effect** is a

**Noun**



Set 1

Words	Notes, tips, and examples
a	
an	
a lot	
alot ☹	
allot	
accept	
except	
adapt	
adopt	
advice	
advise	



Set II

Words	Notes, tips, and examples
affect	
effect	
aggravate	
annoy	
aid	
aide	
all ready	
already	
all right	
alright ☹	

Set III

Words	Notes, tips, and examples
all together	
altogether	
alumnus, alumna	
alumni, alumnae	
allusion	
illusion	
altar	
alter	

set IV

Words	Notes, tips, and examples
among	
between	
anybody	
any body	
bad	
badly	
bear	
bare	
besides	
beside	

set V

Words	Notes, tips, and examples
breath	
breathe	
can	
may	
cannot	
am not	
is not, are not	
capital	
capitol	
coarse	
course	

set VI

Words	Notes, tips, and examples
carat, karat	
caret	
carrot	
cite	
sight	
site	
compliment	
complement	
council	
counsel	

set VII

Words	Notes, tips, and examples
desert	
dessert	
discreet	
discrete	
dual	
duel	
emigrate	
immigrate	
ensure	
insure	

## Parent Overview

## Lesson 2: Subject-Verb Agreement

### Getting Started

#### ? Big Ideas

- How can understanding grammar improve your writing?
- Why do subject-verb agreement errors sometimes occur?



#### Facts and Definitions

- If a subject and verb are separated by one or more prepositional phrases or adjective clauses, pretend those phrases or clauses aren't there and try to match the subject and verb.
- The subject of a verb is never located in a prepositional phrase.
- These indefinite pronouns are always singular: all that begin in "some," "no," or "any" and end in "-thing," "-body," or "-one" (like anything, somebody, or everyone), each, either, neither, other, another, much.
- The indefinite pronouns *both*, *few*, *many*, and *several* are always plural.
- These pronouns can be either singular or plural: *all*, *any*, *most*, *none*, and *some*. Look at the prepositional phrase that follows the word to determine whether the word the pronoun refers to is singular or plural.
- Compound subjects joined by "and" take a plural verb. For subjects joined by "or" or "nor," use the subject closest to the verb to match to the verb.

#### ⦿ Skills

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. (LA)
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. (LA)
- Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., to/too/two; there/their). (LA)
- Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., analyze, analysis, analytical; advocate, advocacy). (LA)
- Ensure subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement. (LA)

### Introducing the Lesson

In this lesson, students begin their study of commonly confused words. They will review 4-5 word groups in most lessons. This study will continue into the second-semester grammar unit as well. This lesson also covers common subject-verb agreement problems. Students should continue reviewing the parts of speech terms from Lesson 1.

### Outline of Activities and Answer Keys

#### Activity 1: Commonly Confused Words, Set I

Starting today, most lessons will include a review of some words that are often confused due to similar sound, spelling, or both. Today, students will read about the first five groups of words. Encourage students to add their own notes or examples and copy some of the helpful tips from the book and lesson onto the "Commonly Confused Words" activity pages. Recording notes helps reinforce the information and will make it easier for students to review.

They will also complete a brief exercise in their grammar workbook. The answers are available at the bottom of the page. If they miss any questions, encourage them to review the applicable word group(s).

#### Activity 2: Subject-Verb Agreement

Students learn about common problems with subject-verb agreement. A link is provided for students who would like to read additional explanations about subject-verb agreement and/or practice their understanding more. There are two options for this activity. Option 1 provides students an opportunity to confirm that they understand subject-verb agreement. Students who may not yet have a firm grip on this topic should complete Option 1. Option 2 is more advanced. Tell students which option to complete. If there is time, you may want to assign students both options.

### Option 1

Students will complete exercises in the workbook and check their own work using the book's answer keys. If they missed any questions, encourage them to re-read that section of the book.

### Option 2

For this option, students use an online quiz creator to make a subject-verb agreement quiz at least 5 sentences long. This requires them to understand the subject-verb agreement rules and be able to explain them to others. Students should have you, a friend, or a sibling take the quiz. The explanations should clarify the correct answers.

## Wrapping Up

### Questions to Discuss

- In the past, have you had problems with any of the commonly confused words presented today? If so, did any of the explanations help you better understand their use? (Answers will vary.)
- What did you learn in today's lesson that you didn't already know? (Answers will vary.)
- Do you think it's acceptable to use words like "alot" (instead of "a lot") in texts or on social media? Why or why not? (Answers will vary.)

### Things to Review

Review the commonly confused words as well as the rules for subject-verb agreement.

## Homework

Today students read about the next set of commonly confused words. Encourage students to add their own notes or examples and copy some of the helpful tips from the book and lesson onto the "Commonly Confused Words" activity pages. Recording notes helps reinforce the information and will make it easier for students to review.