



Problems with plurals in verb-subject agreement

1. Collective nouns

Sometimes the subject (the person or thing doing the action of the verb) may **seem** to be plural, because it is a 'collective noun' - a singular (one) noun that groups together many things or people. For example:

A swarm of bees = one swarm, containing many bees.

A pack of cards = one pack, containing many cards.

This is an area of some debate, but as they are treated as a singular unit, collective nouns usually take the singular verb form. For example:

A **herd** of elephants **was** charging towards us.

The **class** **is** very noisy today.

My football **team** **is** doing really well.

2. The subject is more than one thing or person

Examples:

My colleague and **manager** **were** both promoted today.

(Two people = plural subject.)

Rupert and **Jane** **are** football fans but **Colin** **prefers** shopping.

(Two people = plural subject, takes the plural verb 'are'; one person = singular subject, takes the singular verb 'prefers'.)

3. Is the subject singular or plural?

Example:

The bag of shopping **was** too heavy to carry.

(Bag of shopping = singular subject. Lots of shopping, but there's only one bag.)

Remember: if you're unsure which verb form to use, look at the subject carefully. Is the subject singular (one), or plural (many)? A singular subject requires the singular verb form. A plural subject requires the plural verb form.