

67 Complex agreement

One of the basic principles of English is that subjects and verbs must agree. Some subjects, however, can behave as singular or plural nouns depending on their context.

 **New language** Complex agreement

Aa Vocabulary Collective nouns

 **New skill** Using the correct agreement

67.1 KEY LANGUAGE COLLECTIVE NOUNS

Collective nouns have a singular form, but refer to a number of people or objects as a group. In US English they generally take a singular verb. In UK English they can often be used with either singular or plural verbs.

If the subject describes a singular body then the verb form must be singular.

The **team** **is** getting a new manager next year.

[The team as a whole is getting a new manager.]

The **team** **are** feeling excited about the news.

[Each individual member of the team is feeling excited.]

If the subject describes a collection of individuals, then the verb form can be plural in UK English.



67.2 FILL IN THE GAPS USING THE COLLECTIVE NOUNS IN THE PANEL

Some of my wife's _____ *family* _____ are coming to visit.



① The legal _____ in my office is the largest in the company.



② Members of the _____ are rehearsing in different rooms in the building.



③ The _____ is having an emergency meeting in New York.



④ The soccer _____ is arriving later this evening.



⑤ The entire _____ was delighted by the guest performer last night.



family

team

orchestra

government

department

audience



67.3 KEY LANGUAGE UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS WITH SINGULAR AGREEMENT

Names or titles of books and other works of art that end in a plural noun are treated as singular in terms of agreement.

Though "tales" is plural, *The Canterbury Tales* is a singular work of literature.

The Canterbury Tales was first published in the 1400s.



Other uncountable nouns appear to be plural because they end in an "-s," but have singular agreement. These include many place names and academic subjects.

Mathematics is becoming a more popular subject.



67.4 FURTHER EXAMPLES UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS WITH SINGULAR AGREEMENT



Little Women is a novel by Louisa May Alcott.



Athletics was an important part of the ancient Olympic Games.



The Netherlands is known for its tulip industry.



Politics has long been a topic for academic debate.



67.5 MARK THE SENTENCES THAT ARE CORRECT

The news starts at 10 tonight. ☒
The news start at 10 tonight. ☐

1 I want to study economic. ☐
I want to study economics. ☐

2 Is athletics popular in your country? ☐
Are athletics popular in your country? ☐

3 *Cats* are a successful musical. ☐
Cats is a successful musical. ☐

4 The Philippines are an island country. ☐
The Philippines is an island country. ☐

5 Physics are my favorite subjects. ☐
Physics is my favorite subject. ☐

6 *Hard Times* was written by Dickens. ☐
Hard Times were written by Dickens. ☐

7 The United States has nine time zones. ☐
The United States have nine time zones. ☐



67.6 KEY LANGUAGE AGREEMENT AFTER "EITHER... OR" AND "NEITHER...NOR"

When you use "either... or" or "neither...nor" to join two nouns, the verb agrees with the second noun. However, if the last noun is singular and the first is plural, you can use either a singular verb or a plural verb.



Either a tablet or a **laptop** **is** needed for the course.

The verb agrees with the second, singular noun.



Neither the teacher nor the **children** **were** happy.

The verb agrees with the second, plural noun.



Neither the **classrooms** nor the **office** { **has** / **have** } internet access.

The verb can have singular or plural agreement.



67.7 MATCH THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SENTENCES TO THE CORRECT ENDINGS

I think either an email or a letter

is a great pet for a family.

1 Neither her mother nor her father

is safe to drive anymore.

2 Either a cat or a dog

are happy with the announcement.

3 Either the diner or the coffee shop

is fine for sending this kind of news.

4 Neither the boss nor the workers

has worked hard enough at school.

5 We think that neither Tom nor Katya

was there to pick her up from school.

6 Either the giraffes or the elephant

are the most popular animals in the park.

7 Neither my car nor my motorbike

is fine for our meeting.





67.8 LISTEN TO THE AUDIO AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS



Two friends, Gavin and Nadiya, are talking about new gadgets.

Gavin's new watch is six months old.

True ☐ False ☒ Not given ☐

1 The new watch is available in different colors.

True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐

2 Nadiya is impressed by the watch's battery life.

True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐

3 Gavin thinks all his old gadgets look great.

True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐

4 Nadiya was initially impressed by smartphones.

True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐

5 "R&D" stands for "Research and Development."

True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐

6 Gavin sells his old gadgets on the internet.

True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐

7 Gavin will give Nadiya his "old" watch.

True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐



67.9 SAY THE SENTENCES OUT LOUD, CHOOSING THE CORRECT WORDS

Neither writing nor speaking to people in English **is** / **are** difficult any more.

1 The school **is** / **are** getting new equipment for its technology department.

2 Computer studies **is** / **are** my favorite subject at college at the moment.

3 Neither the cable nor the batteries **is** / **are** included with the new digital radio.

4 The Bahamas **has** / **have** many beaches, including some with pink sand.

5 I don't know what's wrong with it! Either the engine or the fan **is** / **are** broken.

67 CHECKLIST



Complex agreement ☐

Aa Collective nouns ☐



Using the correct agreement ☐