

Advanced 1  
Workbook Unit 4 Language Focus 3  
Presented by Mohammad Rajabpur

## Subject-Verb Agreement

### "a number of" vs. "the number of":

The phrases “a number of” and “the number of” are often confused, but they have distinct meanings and grammatical rules:

1. “A number of”:

- **Meaning:** It refers to an indefinite or unspecified quantity, similar to “several.”
- **Verb Agreement:** It takes a **plural verb** because it implies multiple items or people.
- **Example:** “A number of students **are** participating in the competition.”

2. “The number of”:

- **Meaning:** It refers to a specific, definite quantity or count.
- **Verb Agreement:** It takes a **singular verb** because it emphasizes a single numeric value.
- **Example:** “The number of students in the class **is** 30.”

In summary, use “a number of” when you mean “several” and need a plural verb, and use “the number of” when referring to a specific count and need a singular verb.

Here are some additional examples to illustrate the difference between “a number of” and “the number of”:

#### “A number of” Examples:

1. **Meaning:** Several or many.
  - “A number of employees **have** requested remote work options.”
  - “A number of books **were** donated to the library.”
  - “A number of issues **need** to be addressed before the project can proceed.”

#### “The number of” Examples:

1. **Meaning:** A specific count.
  - “The number of employees in the company **is** 150.”
  - “The number of books in the library **has** increased significantly.”
  - “The number of issues reported **is** concerning.”

#### Mixed Examples:

1. “A number of students **are** interested in the new course, but the number of available seats **is** limited.”
2. “A number of cars **were** parked outside, but the number of parking spaces **is** only 20.”
3. “A number of volunteers **have** signed up, but the number of tasks **is** still overwhelming.”

### **"with" vs. "and":**

“And” joins multiple subjects equally, while “with” adds additional information about the main subject.

**David**, with his brothers, **goes** jogging every day.

Subject → David → singular

**David and his brothers** **go** jogging every day.

Subject → David and his brothers → plural

When using “and,” the verb is usually plural. With “with,” the verb agrees with the main subject.

### **Amounts of Money & Periods of Time:**

When amounts of money or periods of time are the subject of a sentence, the verb typically agrees with the total amount rather than the individual units. Here are some guidelines to help you:

1. **Singular Verb for Total Amounts:** When the focus is on the total amount, use a singular verb.
  - Example: “Ten dollars **is** a high price to pay.”
  - Example: “Five years **is** the maximum sentence for that offense.”
2. **Plural Verb for Multiple Units:** When the focus is on the individual units, use a plural verb.
  - Example: “Ten dollars **were** scattered on the floor.”
  - Example: “Five years **have** passed since we last met.”
3. **Questions to Determine Verb Agreement:**
  - If you can ask “how much?” or “how long?” and the answer is a total amount, use a singular verb.
  - If you can ask “how many?” and the answer is multiple units, use a plural verb

Here are more examples to illustrate how verb agreement works with amounts of money and periods of time:

#### **Amounts of Money**

1. **Singular Verb for Total Amounts:**
  - “Fifty dollars **is** enough to buy the book.”
  - “One hundred euros **is** a lot of money for a meal.”
2. **Plural Verb for Multiple Units:**
  - “Twenty dollars **were** found on the street.”
  - “Several hundred yen **were** scattered across the table.”

#### **Periods of Time**

1. **Singular Verb for Total Amounts:**
  - “Two hours **is** too long to wait.”
  - “A decade **is** a significant period in history.”
2. **Plural Verb for Multiple Units:**
  - “The last three years **have** been challenging.”

- “Five minutes **were** added to the game.”

### **Mixed Examples**

1. “Ten thousand dollars **is** the prize for the winner.”
2. “Three weeks **is** the duration of the course.”
3. “Five dollars **were** missing from my wallet.”
4. “Six months **have** passed since the project started.”

These examples should help clarify how to choose the correct verb form based on whether you’re referring to the total amount or individual units.

### **Names of Foods with 2 Parts:**

When the subject is the name of a food made up of two parts, it usually takes a singular verb. This is because the name of the food is considered a single entity. For example:

- **Macaroni and cheese is my favorite dish.**
- **Fish and chips is a popular meal in the UK.**

In these cases, even though the subject consists of two items joined by “and,” they are treated as a single unit.

### **"Either ... or ..." & "Neither ... nor ..."**

When we use "either ... or ..." or "neither ... nor ..." in the subject of the sentence, the verb agrees with the second part of the subject.

Examples:

*Either the teacher or the students **are** going to talk to the principal.*

*Either the students or the teacher **is** going to talk to the principal.*

*Neither the president nor the ministers **are** going to have a press conference.*

*Neither the ministers nor the president **is** going to have a press conference.*

### **Every/Each + Singular Noun + Singular Verb**

*Every investor tries to find new opportunities for further investments.*

*Each answer is worth 20 points.*

*Every person you invited is coming.*

### **All + Plural Noun + Plural Verb**

*All horses are animals, but not all animals are horses.*

*All the people you invited are coming.*

**Source:**

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