

Compound Subjects

Teaching

A **compound subject** is made up of two or more simple subjects joined by a conjunction such as *and*, *or*, or *nor*.

And A compound subject whose subjects are joined by *and* usually takes a plural verb.

The dog **and** the horse have been important to humans for centuries.

Or or Nor When the parts of a compound subject are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb should agree with the part closest to it.

Either the still photos **or** the video shows the lion's mane.

Neither the spider **nor** the centipede is an insect.

Making Verbs Agree with Compound Subjects

In each sentence, underline each part of the compound subject. Underline twice the word joining the parts. Then underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

1. Either the wild dogs or the baboon (makes, make) that howling sound.
2. Neither crackers nor bread (is, are) good for the ducks.
3. The tourists and their guide (waits, wait) tensely for the elephant to cross the road.
4. Neither the tourists nor their guide (has, have) time to photograph the gazelle.
5. Either the salt lick or the acorns (attracts, attract) the deer to this spot.
6. Both the zoo director and his assistants (speaks, speak) at fundraisers.
7. Neither the drivers nor the pedestrian with a boom box (hears, hear) the birds.
8. Either the deer or the beavers (has, have) been eating the small saplings.
9. Neither the library filmstrips nor the TV documentary (mentions, mention) the mongoose.
10. The collie and the sheepdog (is, are) both from Europe.
11. In many folktales, either wolves or a wicked stepmother (threatens, threaten) the children.
12. Neither the skunk nor the dogs (wants, want) to see each other.
13. Among reindeer, both the male and the female (grows, grow) antlers.
14. Neither my spaniel nor my neighbor's terriers (does, do) tricks.
15. Bug bites or a bee sting (causes, cause) allergic reactions in some people.
16. The squirrels and the pigeons (competes, compete) for the bird seed that my neighbor puts out.

**Lesson
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Compound Subjects

More Practice

A. Making Verbs Agree with Compound Subjects

In each sentence, underline each part of the compound subject. Underline twice the word joining the parts. Then underline the verb in parentheses that agrees with the subject.

1. Neither the senators nor the President (is, are) coming to the ceremony.
2. Either sugar or honey (is, are) acceptable, according to the recipe.
3. Both the graduate and his family (was, were) mentioned in the newspaper article.
4. Either the runners or the walkers (has, have) trampled the flower bed.
5. Neither the mayor nor her aides (is, are) available to answer our questions.
6. Neither the old jeans nor the new shirt (fits, fit) me.
7. Books and lunches (was, were) strewn all over the room.
8. Neither Vermonters nor New Yorkers (want, wants) Lake Champlain polluted.
9. Either my science project or my shoes (is, are) in that bag.
10. Both the bikes and the car (fits, fit) in the garage, but only with careful placement.

B. Using the Correct Verb with a Compound Subject

Write the correct present-tense form of the given verb. Make it agree with the compound subject.

1. Either the bird swings or the small bell (cost) two dollars. _____
2. Dad or my uncles (have) the framed photo of their family dog. _____
3. Unlike lions, neither tigers nor cheetahs (live) in groups. _____
4. Both the polar bear and the caribou (survive) in the Arctic. _____
5. Neither the ducks nor the fox (is, are) entirely believable in the story. _____
6. Either a raccoon or mice (disturb) our garbage every garbage-pickup day. _____
7. Neither hunters nor city sprawl (limit) the deer population. _____
8. Either Dr. Donnelly or her assistants (examine) the new animals at the zoo. _____
9. Neither birds nor the platypus (give) birth to live babies. _____
10. Several turtles and a lizard (crawl) onto the sunny spot on the rock. _____

Lesson
2

Compound Subjects

Application

A. Correcting Errors in Agreement

Find the mistakes in the paragraph. For each sentence, write the correct present tense verb to agree with the subject. If the verb does agree, write **Correct**.

(1) Children and adults enjoy a pet's company. (2) Neither dangerous animals nor any wild animal are a good choice for a pet. (3) Both love and a caring attitude is requirements for pet ownership. (4) Either a hamster or a turtle makes a good pet for a small apartment. (5) Kittens and puppies is available for adoption at shelters.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

B. Using the Correct Verb with Compound Subjects

Write a sentence using each compound subject given in parentheses. Add words to the given subject as needed for the sense of the sentence.

1. (this mare and her foal) _____

2. (many goldfish or one larger fish) _____

3. (neither untrained puppies nor a frisky older dog)

4. (either a park or open fields)

5. (either a dog-walker or neighbor children)

6. (neither Sarah's parents nor her brother)
