Subject/Verb Agreement Notes

keys=

either/or

neither/nor Use the subject following “or” or “nor”

or to determine your verb choice.

nor

Example: Neither Tom nor the **twins** win/wins at

the home swim meets.

Neither the twins nor **Tom** win/wins at

the home swim meets.

and When “and” comes in your subject,

it usually indicates a plural subject.

Example: Tina and Tammy live/lives in Toronto.

**Exceptions** to “and” rule:

1. When “each” or “every” precedes the subject, the subject must be singular.

Example: Every boy and girl is/are in bed.

2. When the subject has “and” but is treated as a single unit, the subject is considered singular.

Example: Macaroni and cheese is/are my favorite

dish.

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Indefinite Pronouns

1. Singular indefinite pronouns take singular verbs.

Example: **Someone** needs/need to hug me.

2. Plural indefinite pronouns take plural verbs.

Example: Others writes/write in my yearbook.

3. Some indefinite pronouns can be singular or plural. When this happens, look at the prepositional phrase in the sentence to determine if the pronoun is singular or plural.

Example: Most of the soup is/are gone. (singular)

Example: Most of the cookies is/are chocolate. (pl)

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Some pronouns look plural but are treated as singular.

Example: That **pair** of pants is/are old and worn

out.

Mumps is/are an illness most people get

when they are children.

Social Studies happens/happen to be my

favorite subject.

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Collective nouns are tricky.

If the members in a collective noun acts as a singular unit (everyone doing everything together at the same time), it is treated as a singular noun.

Example: The class votes/vote for the student council.

If the members in a collective noun act separately, the noun is treated as plural.

Example: The jury comes/come in and takes/take

its/their seats.

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“not only” and “but also”

When a sentence contains “not only” and “but also” in the subject, look after the “but also” to determine if the subject is singular or plural and then to determine if the verb should be singular or plural.

Example: Not only the cookies but also the coffee

is/are delicious.

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Parenthetical expressions

Parenthetical expressions are not considered part of the subject when determining whether to use a singular or plural verb.

Example: The ugly skirt, together with the ugly shoes, stops/stop Tanya from getting a date.