



NDA/NA ENGLISH MASTERY SERIES

MODULE 06

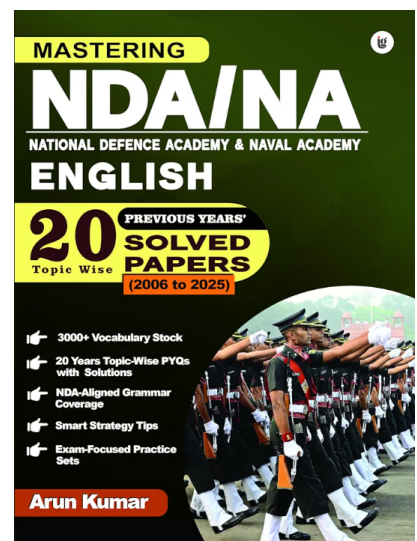
Subject-Verb Agreement

High-yield concord rules with examples, error patterns and practice.

From the book

MASTERING NDA/NA ENGLISH

ARUN KUMAR



SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

➤ What is Subject-Verb Agreement?

Subject-Verb Agreement, also called Concord, refers to the grammatical rule that the verb in a sentence must agree in number and person with its subject.

🔑 Golden Rule:

- Singular Subject → Singular Verb
- Plural Subject → Plural Verb
- ✓ She reads well.
- ✓ They read well.

➤ Important Terminology

- Subject – The doer of the action (or the noun/pronoun the sentence is about)
- Verb – The action word or state of being

➤ Core Rules of Subject-Verb Agreement

Rule 1: Singular and Plural Subjects

A singular subject takes a singular verb. A plural subject takes a plural verb.

- The boy runs fast.
- The boys run fast.

Rule 2: Two Subjects Joined by 'and' → Plural Verb

When two singular nouns are joined by "and", the verb is plural. But if the two are seen as one unit, the verb is singular.

- Ram and Shyam are friends.
- Bread and butter is his breakfast.
- The poet and philosopher has arrived. (Refers to one person)
- The poet and the philosopher have arrived. (Refers to two persons)

Rule 3: Subjects Joined by 'or', 'nor', 'either...or', 'neither...nor'

The verb agrees with the subject that is nearer to it.

- The teacher or the students have submitted their assignments..
- Either the students or the teacher has arrived.
- Neither the workers nor the manager was present at the meeting.
- Neither the players nor the captain was responsible for the defeat.

Rule 4: 'When the subject is followed by phrases like *with*, *together with*, *as well as*, *in addition to*, *etc.*, the verb agrees with the main subject (not with the phrase).

◆ Examples:

1. The teacher, along with the students, *is* present.
(✓ Main subject = *teacher* → singular)
2. The students, as well as the teacher, *are* ready.
(✓ Main subject = *students* → plural)
3. Rahul, in addition to his friends, *is* coming.
(✓ Main subject = *Rahul* → singular)

I Subject-Verb Agreement I

Rule 5: Collective Nouns

A collective noun takes a singular verb if considered as one unit, and a plural verb when individuals are acting separately.

- The jury has given its verdict.
- The jury are divided in their opinions.
- The team are arguing among themselves.
- The team **has** won the championship.

Rule 6: Indefinite Pronouns

Pronouns like *each*, *everyone*, *someone* are always singular; *few*, *many*, *several* are always plural; *some*, *all*, *most*, *none* can be both.

- Each of the players is tired.
- Some of the books are torn.
- Some of the water is wasted.

Rule 7: Distances, Amounts, Time → Singular Verb

When used as a unit, expressions of distance, time, and money take a singular verb.

- Five thousand rupees is a large sum.
- Ten kilometers is a long distance.

Rule 8: Uncountable Nouns → Singular Verb

Uncountable nouns (also called mass nouns) are things we cannot count individually. They have no plural form and always take a singular verb. They usually refer to substances, concepts, qualities, or abstract ideas.

- Substances/materials: milk, water, rice, sugar, oil, gold, sand
- Abstract qualities: honesty, wisdom, beauty, courage
- Fields of study: physics, economics, mathematics, ethics
- Other mass nouns: furniture, luggage, equipment, news, information

Rule 9: Nouns Ending in -s but Singular

Some nouns end in -s and look plural, but they refer to a single subject or field of study and are therefore treated as singular. So, they take a singular verb.

◆ Examples:

- Mathematics is my favorite subject.
(*"Mathematics" is a single branch of study → singular verb "is"*)
- Politics plays a major role in modern society.
(*"Politics" = field/area of study or practice → singular*)
- The news is spreading fast.
(*"News" refers to information, not many individual items → singular*)

Exception – Plural Meaning in Specific Context

These same words can be plural when they refer to specific instances, details, or applications within the subject.

- The mathematics of this design are complicated. (specific calculations)
- The statistics on literacy are surprising. (actual data points)
- His ethics are questionable. (personal moral choices)

Rule 10: Plural Nouns with Singular Meaning

Some nouns that are plural in form refer to singular things and take singular verbs.

- Measles is contagious.
- Athletics is popular in the Olympics.
- Statistics is a difficult subject.

Rule 11: Use of 'There' or 'Here'

The verb agrees with the actual subject that follows *there* or *here*.

- There is a *pen* on the table.
- There are *many pens* on the table.

I Subject-Verb Agreement I

Rule 12: Relative Pronouns (who, which, that)

The verb agrees with the noun that the relative pronoun refers to.

- He is one of those who have won.
- He is the only one who has passed.

Rule 13: Expressions with Fractions or Percentages

With fractions, percentages, and proportions (half of, one-third of, 50% of, most of, some of, etc.), the verb agrees with the noun following "of."

- Fifty percent of the water is gone.
- Fifty percent of the students are present.

Rule 14: Noun + Prepositional Phrase

The verb agrees with the main subject, not with the object of a prepositional phrase like *of*, *in*, *with*.

- The bouquet of roses is beautiful.
- The quality of the apples was poor.

Rule 15: "The number of" vs "A number of"

The number of takes a singular verb, while *A number of* takes a plural verb.

- A number of students have passed.
- The number of students has increased.

Rule 16: Words Expressing Quantity (Majority, Minority, Rest)

With fractions, percentages, and proportions (half of, one-third of, 50% of, most of, some of, etc.), the verb agrees with the noun following "of."

- A majority of students are absent.
- A majority of work is done.

Rule 17: Plural Titles/Names → Singular Verb

Titles of books, countries, or organisations that look plural take a singular verb.

- Gulliver's Travels is an interesting book.
- The United Nations is an international body.

Rule 18: Intervening Expressions Don't Affect Agreement

Words or phrases e.g., "as well as," "along with," "accompanied by" between the subject and verb do not affect subject-verb agreement. The verb agrees only with the main subject, ignoring the intervening expression.

- My teacher, as well as the students, is attending the seminar.
- The players, accompanied by their coach, have reached the stadium.
- The captain, along with the team members, was praised.

Rule 19: Words Like 'Each', 'Every', 'No' Before Subject → Singular Verb

When the words each, every, or no come before a subject, they make the subject singular, even if more than one person or thing is mentioned. These words focus on each individual separately, not on the group as a whole. Therefore, the verb must always be singular..

- Each boy and each girl is present.
- Every man and woman has arrived.

Rule 20: One of + Plural Noun → Singular Verb

Use a singular verb after *one of the + plural noun*.

- One of the boys is absent.
- One of the girls has topped the class.

Rule 21: Inverted Sentences

When the verb comes before the subject, make sure the verb agrees with the actual subject.

- Down the road comes the bus.
- On the table are your keys.

I Subject-Verb Agreement I

Rule 22: 'None' – Singular or Plural Based on Meaning

None takes singular or plural verb depending on the noun it refers to.

- None of the students are present.
- None of the work is pending.

Rule 23: Gerund (Verb + ing) as Subject → Singular Verb

A gerund used as a subject takes a singular verb.

- Swimming is good for health.
- Reading improves knowledge.

Rule 24: Titles or Names of Books/Movies → Singular Verb

Plural-looking titles are considered singular entities.

- The Chronicles of Narnia is a famous book.
- Gulliver's Travels is widely read.

Rule 25: 'More than one' → Singular Verb

The phrase *more than one* takes a singular verb.

- More than one student has failed.
- More than one item is missing.

Rule 26: 'One of the + Plural Noun + who/that' → Plural Verb After Who/That

When the phrase "one of the" is followed by a **plural noun**, the verb after "who" or "that" should be plural, because the verb refers to the plural noun, not to "one."

- She is one of the girls who have topped the class.
- He is one of the players who have been selected for the national team.
- This is one of the books that are recommended for the exam.

Rule 27: 'Whatever', 'Whoever', 'What' as Subject → Singular Verb

When indefinite pronouns like *Whatever*, *Whoever*, *What*, *Whichever*, *Etc.* are used as the subject of a sentence, they refer to an unknown or non-specific thing/person and are treated as singular. So, they take a singular verb, even if they refer to something plural in meaning.

- Whatever he says is nonsense.
- What you did was right.
- Whoever wins the race gets the prize.
- Whatever happens is out of our control.
- Whichever option you choose is fine.

Rule 28: 'A pair of', 'A set of' → Singular Verb

When referring to a single item made of two parts, use singular verb.

- A pair of shoes is on the rack.
- A set of keys was lost.

Rule 29: Plural Numbers as a Unit → Singular Verb

When time, amount or measurement is considered as a whole, use a singular verb.

- Ten years is a long time.
- Two hundred rupees is not enough.

Rule 30: Fractions like 'One-third of', 'Half of', etc. → Verb Depends on Noun After 'Of'

Verb agrees with the noun following *of*.

- One-third of the cake is eaten.
- One-third of the students are absent.

Rule 31: Infinitive or Clause as Subject → Singular Verb

An infinitive or clause used as a subject takes a singular verb.

I Subject-Verb Agreement I

- To err is human.
- What he said was unbelievable.
- To read regularly helps improve vocabulary.
- How the accident happened remains a mystery.

Rule 32: Adjectives as Plural Nouns for Groups → Plural Verb

When certain adjectives are used as nouns to refer to a group of people, they act like plural nouns and therefore take a plural verb. These adjectives refer to categories of people as a whole — not individuals — and usually begin with "the".

- The poor are suffering.
- The blind are given free books.
- The rich have many privileges.
- The elderly need special care.

Rule 33: Nouns Always Plural in Form → Plural Verb

Some nouns are always plural in form and therefore take plural verbs. These words usually refer to things that have two parts (like trousers, scissors, or spectacles) or represent plural ideas. They do not have a singular form and are always used with plural verbs and plural determiners like these or those.

- My trousers are wet.
- These scissors are sharp.
- The binoculars are expensive.
- Your spectacles are on the table.

Rule 34: In Questions – Verb Agrees with Subject

Even if the verb comes before the subject, it must agree with the subject.

- Are your friends coming?
- Is your brother ready?

Rule 35: Many a + Singular Noun → Singular Verb

When "many a" is used before a singular noun, it takes a singular verb.

- Many a student has failed.
- Many a soldier has sacrificed his life.

Rule 36: The Only One of + Plural Noun + Who/That → Singular Verb

When the phrase "the only one of" is followed by a plural noun, the verb after "who" or "that" must be singular, because the subject of the clause is "one," not the plural noun that follows.

- She is the only one of the girls who has passed.
- He is the only one of the players who has scored.

Rule 37: Each/Neither/Either/Every One of + Plural Noun → Singular Verb

These expressions are followed by singular verbs even if the noun is plural.

- Each of the students was selected.
- Neither of the men was guilty.

Rule 38: Group/Unit + Plural Noun → Verb Depends on Meaning

When a collective noun (e.g., "group," "team," "class") is followed by a plural noun (e.g., "boys," "students"), the verb's form—singular or plural—depends on whether the collective noun is treated as a single unit or as individual members acting separately.

- A group of boys is playing in the field. (one unit)
- A group of boys are fighting among themselves. (individuals)

Rule 39: Singular-Looking Nouns but Plural in Meaning → Plural Verb

Some nouns appear singular in form but are plural in meaning and therefore take a plural verb. These words refer to groups or collections of people or animals considered as many individuals.

- The police have arrested the thief.

I Subject-Verb Agreement I

- The cattle are grazing in the field.
- The clergy have gathered for the meeting.

Rule 40: Sentences Starting with "Only" → Verb Agrees with Real Subject

In sentences beginning with "only," the verb must agree with the actual subject.

- Only the best players win medals.
- Only your brother knows the truth.

Rule 41: When phrases like "Nothing But," "Not But," "No Less Than," "None But" are used: Ignore the phrase at the beginning.

The verb must agree with the real subject that follows.

- ✓ Nothing but excuses has been given.
- ✓ No less than five boys have qualified.
- ✓ Not but one man was present.
- ✓ None but the brave deserve the award.

Rule 42: As Much As/As Many As → Verb Agrees with the Noun After 'As'

In comparative expressions with "as much/many as," the verb agrees with the noun that follows.

- As much as ₹10 lakh has been spent.
- As many as fifty students have enrolled.

Practice Set: Subject – Verb Agreement

Directions: Each sentence contains an error related to subject-verb agreement, especially involving collective nouns, compound subjects, distributive expressions (like each, neither, either), inverted structures, and quantity expressions (like a number of, the number of, none of). Identify the mismatch between the subject and its verb, and correct it to ensure the verb agrees in number with the intended subject.

Practice Set 1

1. The quality of these apples have deteriorated due to untimely rains.
2. Never I have met a person who is reckless to such an extent.
3. Ten Kilometers are a long way to walk.
4. Billiards are not a popular game.
5. Either the manager or the employees is responsible for the error.
6. The team, along with their coach, have arrived at the stadium.
7. Neither the students nor the teacher were prepared for the test.
8. The board of directors have approved the new budget proposal.
9. Either the documents or the report were missing from the file.
10. The crowd, chanting slogans, were dispersed by the police.
11. The government, elected last year, have introduced new policies.
12. The wages of sin are death.
13. Each of the candidates were required to submit a resume.
14. Everyone in the team have contributed to the project's success.
15. Nobody in the room were aware of the new policy.
16. One of the machines were malfunctioning during the test.
17. A number of issues was raised during the meeting.
18. Few of the applicants was qualified for the position.
19. House after house were destroyed.
20. If he acted on time, the situation would not have turned worse.
21. Under the tree were a basket of apples.
22. Do you think , ten thousand rupees are a big sum for the work you are going to start?
23. The students, as well as the teacher, has to work well.

I Subject-Verb Agreement I

24. More than one student have suspected of cheating in the exam.
25. A good many of us has gone to Shimla.

Practice Set 2

1. The orchestra have been practicing for the upcoming concert with great dedication.
2. I would like you to complete this task before you will leave for your home.
3. His mother was very angry when she found that he is not here.
4. Either the book or the notes is sufficient for the exam.
5. The faculty members, along with the dean, have attended the conference.
6. Neither the players nor the coach were satisfied with the result.
7. The panel of experts have submitted their recommendations.
8. The army, stationed at the border, were conducting drills.
9. It was high time the committee has taken steps to resolve the issue, but they kept delaying the decision.
10. Anybody who arrives late are required to register at the desk.
11. Many a soldier have sacrificed their life for the nation.
12. Some of the furniture were sold at the auction.
13. Much of the information were outdated and irrelevant.
14. The scissors on the table needs sharpening.
15. The United Nations have passed a resolution on peace.
16. She like other members of her family were left homeless after the flood came in her village.
17. The police was investigating the case thoroughly.
18. The economics of the region have improved significantly.
19. The criteria for selection was revised last month.
20. The pair of shoes were too tight for comfort.
21. Behind the building were parked a fleet of vehicles.
22. At the summit was gathered the world's top leaders.
23. The series of events were planned meticulously.
24. The array of options were confusing to the team.
25. The headquarters of the company were located in Delhi.

Answer Key

Practice Set 1

1. have → has
→ "The Subject 'Quality' will agree with singular verb.
2. Never I have → Never have I
→ Apply inversion in sentence beginning with negative word.
3. Are → is
→ Although "kilometers" is plural, when used to express a single measure of distance, it is treated as a singular unit.
4. Are → is
→ "Billiards" is a singular noun that ends in -s, but it refers to a single game (like mathematics, news, politics). So it takes a singular verb.
5. is → are
→ Verb agrees with employees (plural), which is nearer to the verb.
6. have → has
→ "Team" is a collective noun used as a unit → singular verb.
7. were → was
→ Nearest subject: teacher (singular) will take singular verb..
8. have → has
→ "Board of directors" is a collective noun used as a unit → singular verb.
9. were → was
→ "Report" is nearer subject and singular → verb must be was.
10. were → was
→ "Crowd" is collective → singular usage → was dispersed.
11. have → has
→ "Government" as a unit → singular verb.
12. Are → is
→ wages when means consequences is treated singular.
13. were → was
→ "Each" is always singular → singular verb was.
14. have → has
→ "Everyone" is singular → verb should be has.
15. were → was
→ "Nobody" is singular → verb should be was.
16. were → was
→ "One of" is always singular → was malfunctioning.
17. was → were
→ "A number of" always takes plural verb → were raised.

I Subject-Verb Agreement I

18. was → were
→ "Few" is plural → plural verb were qualified.
19. were → was
→ When expressions like "village after village," "day after day," "house after house" are used, they refer to each unit one by one — treated as singular in structure, even if referring to multiple things.
20. If he acted → If he had acted
→ In such conditional sentence "had is followed by would have"
21. were → was
→ Subject is a basket → singular → was under the tree.
22. Are → is
→ ten thousand ruppees is ...(Sum of money treated singular)
23. has → have
→ The verb agrees with the first subject (farther from the verb).
24. Have → Has
→ The phrase "more than one" is grammatically singular, even though it implies plurality.
25. Has → have
→ The phrase "a good many of" is plural in meaning, even though it starts with "a".
8. were → was
→ "Army" is singular → was conducting.
9. has taken → took
→ After "It was high time," we use the simple past tense (V2), even though we are talking about something that should be happening now or already.
10. are → is
→ "Anybody" is singular → is required.
11. have → has
→ "Many a + singular noun" → singular verb → has sacrificed.
12. were → was
→ "Furniture" is uncountable → was sold.
13. were → was
→ "Information" is uncountable → was outdated.
14. needs
→ "Scissors" are plural in form but take plural verb → should be need sharpening.
15. have → has
→ "United Nations" treated as singular body → has passed.
16. Were → was
→ "The verb should agree with the main subject that is "She".
17. was → were
→ "Police" is always plural → were investigating.
18. No Error
→ "Economics" is singular as a subject → but here refers to systems → have improved is acceptable.

Practice Set 2

1. have → has
→ "Orchestra" is a collective noun → singular verb.
2. Before you will leave → Before you leave
3. Is not here → was not there
→ 'found' is in past tense so the following clause to be in past tense.
4. is → are
→ Nearest subject notes is plural → are sufficient.
5. No Error
6. were → was
→ Nearer subject is coach (singular)..
7. have → has
→ "Panel" is singular → has submitted.
19. was → were
→ "Criteria" is plural → were revised.
20. were → was
→ "Pair" is singular → was too tight.
21. were → was
→ Subject is a fleet (singular) → was parked.
22. was → were
→ The subject is "world's top leaders"
23. were → was
→ Subject is series → was planned.
24. were → was
→ Subject is array → was confusing.
25. were → was
→ "Headquarters" looks plural but is used as singular when refers to main office of any organisation.