

Agreement with Compound Subjects A

A *compound subject* consists of two or more subjects that are joined by a conjunction and that have the same verb.

18e. Subjects joined by *and* usually take a plural verb.

Some compound subjects joined by *and* name only one person or thing and take singular verbs.

EXAMPLES **Alfre Woodard, Benjamin Bratt, and Danny Glover** were present at the awards show.
The **producer and director** of the movie **was** Penny Marshall.

18f. Singular subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a singular verb.

EXAMPLE Neither **Denzel Washington** nor **Nick Nolte** **has appeared** on that talk show.

18g. When a singular subject and a plural subject are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject nearer the verb.

EXAMPLES Neither the team **members** nor the **coach** **has been** to the Super Bowl.
Neither the **coach** nor the team **members** **have been** to the Super Bowl.

EXERCISE In each of the following sentences, underline once the simple subjects that are part of the compound subject. Then, underline twice the verb in parentheses that agrees in number with the compound subject.

Example 1. To pay for child care and to save for retirement (take, takes) a large amount of Aunt Rita's salary.

1. Either the dogs or some wild animal (has, have) dug a hole (under the fence in the backyard).
2. In the past, (have, has) juggling and mime been taught (at the performing arts summer school)?
3. A cup of sugar and three cups of whole wheat flour (have, has) been measured and set aside.
4. Either Rick or his brother (walks, walk) their dog, Buster, every morning and evening.
5. (Has, Have) working (at the movie theater) and doing your homework been taking up most (of your time?)
6. (Is, Are) Anna or Elise making the costumes (for the senior class play)?
7. Jonathan, Dana, Leroy, and I (are, is) planning a road trip (for spring break).
8. Steak and potatoes (were, was) my dad's favorite meal until his doctor told him to reduce the amount of cholesterol in his diet. → It's a dish
9. Talking (with clients and designing furniture for them) (make, makes) up most of Dan's day.
10. The large oak tree in the front yard and the smaller one (in the back) (are, is) not (in danger) (of getting oak wilt disease).