

Subject-Verb Agreement – Prepositional Phrases

A **prepositional phrase** can sometimes complicate subject-verb agreement.

A prepositional phrase is composed of:

a **preposition** followed by a **noun** or **pronoun object**

Examples of Prepositional Phrases:

preposition modifier noun
of the car

preposition modifiers noun
at the brown house

preposition pronoun object
about him

preposition modifiers noun
over that last big hill

preposition modifiers pronoun object
to a sweet someone

Here is a list of frequently used prepositions:

to	for	without	over	along
in	from	after	except	across
into	on	about	until	down
at	upon	above	between	through
by	with	under	behind	of

A prepositional phrase may be placed between the subject and verb.

The **boy** (at the door) **is** my brother.

The subject (**boy**) is singular, so the verb (**is**) needs to be singular as well. In the above example, the singular verb **is** agrees with the singular subject **boy**. Sometimes, however, a prepositional phrase inserted between the subject and verb makes agreement more difficult.

The **car** (with many riders) **was** my speeding around the curve.

The subject (**car**) is singular, so the verb (**was**) needs to be singular as well.

If we aren't careful, however, we may mistakenly label **riders** as the subject since it is nearer to the verb than **car** is. If we choose the plural noun, **riders**, we will incorrectly select the plural verb **were**.

Solution to the Prepositional Phrase Problem

1. Learn the major prepositions (see page 28).
2. Be alert for prepositional phrases placed between the subject and verb, and identify the noun in the phrase immediately as the **object of a preposition**: An object of a preposition can NEVER be a **sentence subject**.
3. Locate the true sentence **subject** and choose a verb which agrees with it.
4. Remember the indefinite pronoun EXCEPTIONS: **Some**, **Any**, **None**, **All**, and **Most**. The number of these subject words IS affected by a prepositional phrase between the subject and verb.

Name _____

Subject - Verb Agreement - Exercise 2

Part I

Directions: Each sentence below contains an indefinite pronoun subject. ***Circle the correct verb from the parentheses to agree with the subject.***

1. One of the many cultures studied by anthropologists (is, are) the Kwakiutl Indians.
2. This group of Indians (lives, live) on the Canadian Coast.
3. Often the leader of the Kwakiutl dances, (foams, foam) at the mouth and (tosses, toss) burning ashes into the crowd.
4. Wealth, like cedar bark blankets, canoes, and large sculptured copper pieces, (is, are) important to the Kwakiutl.
5. To the Kwakiutl, one of the copper pieces (equals, equal) a thousand cedar bark blankets.

Part II

Directions: This group of sentences contains a mixture of correct and incorrect subject-verb combinations. Read each sentence carefully. ***If the subject and verb agree, write "correct" in the space provided below. If the subject and verb do not agree, correct the sentence. Write the corrections in the space below.***

6. Kwakiutl ceremonies for showing one's wealth is called "potlatches."
7. The host of a potlatch tries to shame his rival by displaying his wealth.
8. The host with all these goods sometimes even throw them into a giant bonfire.
9. The rival without equal amounts of riches feel greatly ashamed.
10. In our culture, some behaviors of the Kwatiutl Indian is not acceptable.