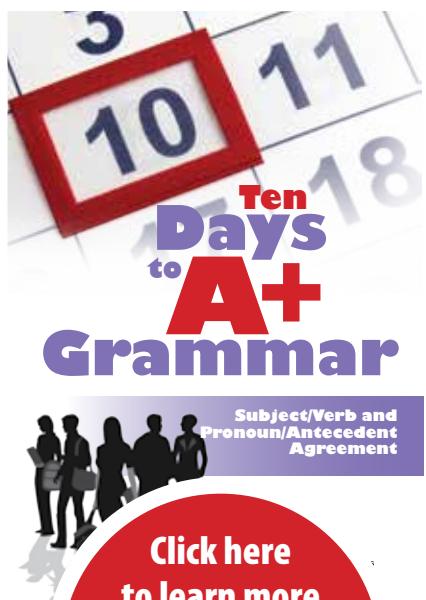




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Ten Days to A+ Grammar

**Subject/Verb and Pronoun/
Antecedent Agreement**



by Cheryl Miller Thurston



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Introduction

Ten Days to A+ Grammar: Subject/Verb and Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement helps students learn the basics of subject/verb agreement and also gives them tools to decide which verb to use when sentences are complicated by phrases and clauses, inverted order, compound subjects, etc. It goes on to point out that, just as subjects and verbs must agree in number, pronouns must also agree with their antecedents. After a brief review of antecedents, students learn how to avoid common errors in pronoun/antecedent agreement.

The emphasis is on handling ordinary agreement issues that students are most likely to encounter in their own writing. The lessons are arranged so that agreement issues that are rare or more difficult come at the end of each section. If students are having trouble grasping the basics, a teacher can choose to leave out some or all of these sections.

Teaching agreement has become more difficult in recent years as popular culture has made certain substandard constructions more and more common, “He don’t” or “She be going” sound just fine to many students, and they can be resistant when they feel their own lives and customs are being criticized. The introductory lesson on forms of English attempts to help students understand the relevance of “Standard English,” while still respecting whatever forms of English they use to communicate on a daily basis. Knowing Standard English gives students choices. If they don’t know it, they are often limited in their choices and, therefore, their opportunities in life.

Some daily units include more exercises that most classes will be able to cover. The exercises can, therefore, be assigned as homework, extra credit, assignments for specific students who need extra help, etc.

Quizzes, reviews, exercises, and answer keys are all on separate pages, which allows you to copy and distribute the work.

Both sections of this unit introduce a great deal of material, and the review game on Day #9 helps students digest what they have learned.

The packet contents at a glance:

1. Pretest and “Why Do We Have to Learn This Stuff?”
2. Helping students understand that singular nouns take singular verbs, and plural nouns take plural verbs
3. Helping students understand how to handle compound subjects joined with *and* and compound subjects joined with *or*
4. Helping students understand that certain words are always singular and certain words are always plural
5. Helping students learn how to deal with a number of subject/verb agreement issues that often cause problems, such as collective nouns and sentences in which the subject follows the verb
6. Helping students understand that every pronoun must have a clear antecedent
7. Helping students understand that a pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number
8. Helping students understand how to handle some of the more difficult issues involving pronoun/antecedent agreement, including singular antecedents that require gender-neutral pronouns



DAY #1: Teacher Instructions

Objectives:

- to assess how well students understand subject/verb agreement
- to assess how well students understand pronoun/antecedent agreement
- to give students a quick overview of what they will be studying for the next ten days
- to help students understand the importance of using correct grammar

Activities:

1. **Pretest.** Give the pretest “Subject/Verb & Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement.”
2. **Overview.** After students finish the pretest, give a brief overview of what will happen over the next ten days. Students will learn about subject/verb agreement and pronoun/antecedent agreement. They will also learn how to apply the rules to their own writing.
3. **Lesson.** Present “Why Do We Have to Learn This Stuff?” You might present the material in the lesson in your own words, project the page for the class to see (overhead projector, interactive whiteboard, etc.), or photocopy the material and have students read along as you go over it.

The lesson points out that what we call “proper” or “standard English” is something that has developed over the years to help communication. Knowing how to write and speak according to the rules of Standard English is something expected of those who receive an education in U.S. schools. Students who know the rules can choose to follow them when they want and ignore them when they want. Those who *don’t* know the rules limit their opportunities. Students who show openness about language and a respect for the idea that informal English isn’t the *only* English will be more receptive to learning.

To reinforce the idea that language differs across the U.S. in many ways, show students the “What Do You Say?” list of words used in various parts of the country. Ask them which terms are ones that they commonly use. Which ones are not? Students might also be interested in investigating differences in terms used by English speakers in England and English speakers in the U.S., using the Internet to find information.

DAY #1: Pretest

Subject/Verb and Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement • Section A

Directions: Some of the sentences below are correct. Some are incorrect. Put a “C” beside each one that is correct. Put an “I” beside any incorrect sentences.

1. ____ One of the friends are surely going to get tired and drop out.
2. ____ Zola, along with the Ling twins, is collecting donations for the food bank.
3. ____ Coyotes live in many areas of Utah and New Mexico.
4. ____ The instruments in the band needs tuning.
5. ____ Several boys has asked Renata for a date, but she has turned them all down.
6. ____ Beans and onions fill the tortillas when my Aunt Rosa cook.
7. ____ A few of the pieces of pottery is broken.
8. ____ Vanessa or Maya is going to take over.
9. ____ Each of the cooks on the food channel are trying to win the grand prize.
10. ____ Each of those paintings look strange, but the watercolor looks the strangest.
11. ____ There is rolls of toilet paper hanging all over the trees in our front yard.
12. ____ Gordon don't like peas, and he is never going to like peas.
13. ____ “Fifty dollars is too much to pay for a pair of socks,” said Charity, “no matter how cute they are.”
14. ____ The play *Eight Little Soldiers* were being presented at the local theater.
15. ____ Every single boy or girl who ate the fish sticks were sick all night.

Subject/Verb and Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement • Section B

Directions: Underline the correct word in parentheses and write it in the blank provided.

16. _____ Measles (is, are) very rare now among children in the United States.
17. _____ There (is, are) 24 cans of cat food in that closet.
18. _____ The scissors (is, are) in the top drawer.

19. _____ Neither my computer nor my television (is, are) working tonight.
20. _____ Where (is, are) the pants I put in the closet last week?
21. _____ The cat or the three puppies (is, are) going to be adopted first.
22. _____ Nobody I know from my classes (show, shows) up at the tutoring sessions.
23. _____ The potatoes or the carrot (is, are) going down the disposal first.
24. _____ *The Birds* (is, are) a classic Alfred Hitchcock movie.
25. _____ In Alan's opinion, seventy-five dollars (is, are) a reasonable hourly rate.

DAY #1: Pretest • Answer Key

Subject/Verb and Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement • Section A

1. I
2. C
3. C
4. I
5. I
6. I
7. I
8. C
9. I
10. I
11. I
12. I
13. C
14. I
15. I

Subject/Verb and Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement • Section B

16. Measles is very rare now among children in the United States.
17. There are 24 cans of cat food in that closet.
18. The scissors are in the top drawer.
19. Neither my computer nor my television is working tonight.
20. Where are the pants I put in the closet last week?
21. The cat or the three puppies are going to be adopted first.
22. Nobody I know from my classes shows up at the tutoring sessions.
23. The potatoes or the carrot is going down the disposal first.
24. The Birds is a classic Alfred Hitchcock movie.
25. In Alan's opinion, seventy-five dollars is a reasonable hourly rate.

DAY #1: Lesson**Why Do We Have to Learn This Stuff?**

Did you know that the English language is a bit like clothing? Most of us have different categories of clothing that we wear for different occasions—maybe a swimsuit for the beach, shorts for playing basketball, a heavy coat for winter, flip-flops for hanging around. Most of us choose what we wear according to the circumstances. Show up on the beach in a heavy coat with a hood, and people are likely to look at you as if you were odd.

Most of us also choose language according to the circumstances—at least to some degree. We may use certain slang or even current expressions around our friends, but not around our grandmothers. We may write one way in a text message to a friend and another way when we answer questions for a school assignment. We may use certain words and language when talking to parents of a three-year-old we are babysitting, and very different words when we talk to the three-year-old herself. If we live in a neighborhood where many people have the same ethnic background, we probably use words that someone from a different area wouldn't understand. Language also differs according to the area of the country where we live. For example, in some parts of the country, people commonly say *sack*. In others, they say *bag*. In some areas, they say *pop*. In others, they say *soda*.

Language differs among families, too. In one family, the word *ain't* might be used all the time and be considered perfectly acceptable. In another family, parents would instantly correct a child for saying *ain't*. In another one, *ain't* would be fine for some situations, but not for others.

Standard American English. Over the years, one “standard” form of English has developed, and that standard form is the language of newspapers, magazines, websites, blogs, TV, textbooks, most fiction and nonfiction, pamphlets, instruction books, etc. People anywhere in the country understand it. It is also the English that you study in school. Certain rules, customs, and practices have become standard over the years, and most experts agree on them, helping make communication clearer and more efficient. When you know the rules and can communicate well in this standard form of English, you have a power that others do not. Although you may choose *not* to use it for some situations, when you want to use it, you can. That gives you a huge advantage over someone who doesn't know Standard American English and, therefore, can't choose. Many doors may be closed to that person.

Knowing the rules, in other words, gives you power. It gives you choices. That's why we study the rules and how to use them.

What do you say? You may know that many words used in England are not words we use in the U.S. For example, a truck is a *lorry* in England. *Cookies* are *biscuits*. *Elevators* are *lifts*.

But the English language also differs in the way it's used across the United States. Look at the words on the following page. Which ones are terms you use? Which are not? What terms can you add to the list?

English Terms

bag	pocketbook
sack	dinner
stream	supper
creek	billfold
y'all	wallet
you	beach
faucet	shore
spigot	standing in line
frying pan	standing on line
skillet	turnpike
teeter-totter	highway
seesaw	freeway
lollipop	sneakers
sucker	sneaks
pail	gym shoes
bucket	hero
dungarees	sub
jeans	hoagie
purse	gyro

