

B. com Semr II  
Soft Skill - General English

### PREPOSITIONS

*"The plane flew above the cloud, behind the cloud, around the cloud, below the cloud, beneath the cloud, beside the cloud, beyond the cloud, into the cloud, near the cloud, outside the cloud, over the cloud, past the cloud, through the cloud, toward the cloud, under the cloud, and finally dived underneath the cloud."*

A preposition is a word that shows the relationship between two things. In the example above, the prepositions show the relationships between a plane and a cloud. Below is a list of most common prepositions:

about	beside	inside	to
above	besides	like	toward
across	between	near	under
after	beyond	of	underneath
against	by	off	until
along	despite	on	up
among	down	out	with
around	during	outside	within
at	except	over	without
before	for	past	
behind	from	since	
below	in	through	
beneath	into	throughout	

Some prepositions consist of more than one word. Here is a list of the most common multiword prepositions:

along with	in place of
because of	in spite of
Due to	instead of
except for	on account of
in addition to	out of
in case of	up to
in front of	with the exception of

## Prepositions for Time, Place, and Introducing Objects

### Time

- **On** is used with days.

I will see you on Monday.  
The week begins on Sunday.

- **At** is used with noon, night, midnight, and with the time of day.

My plane leaves at noon.  
The movie starts at 6 p.m.

- **In** is used with other parts of the day, with months, with years, with seasons.

He likes to read in the afternoon.  
The days are long in August.  
The book was published in 1999.  
The flowers will bloom in spring.

- **Since, for, by, from—to, from—until, during, (with)in** – expresses extended time.

She has been gone since yesterday. (She left yesterday and has not returned.)  
I'm going to Paris for two weeks. (I will spend two weeks there.)  
The movie showed from August to/until October. (Beginning in August, ending in October.)  
I watch TV during the evening. (For some period of time in the evening.)  
We must finish the project within a year. (No longer than a year.)

### Place

- **In** – describes the point itself.

There is a wasp in the room.

- **Inside** – expresses something contained.

Put the present inside the box.

- **On** – talks about the surface.

I left your keys on the table.

- **At** – talks about a general vicinity.

She was waiting at the corner.

- **Over, above** – when the object is higher than a point.

He threw the ball over the roof.  
Hang that picture above the couch.

- **Under, underneath, beneath, below** – when the object is lower than a point.

The rabbit burrowed under the ground.  
The child hid underneath the blanket.  
We relaxed in the shade beneath the branches.  
The valley is below sea-level.

- **Near, by, next to, between, among, opposite** – when the object is close to a point.

She lives near the school.  
There is an ice cream shop by the store.  
An oak tree grows next to my house.  
The house is between Elm Street and Maple Street.  
I found my pen lying among the books.  
The bathroom is opposite the kitchen.

### Introduce objects of verbs

- **At** – with verbs glance, laugh, look, rejoice, smile, and stare

She took a quick glance at her reflection.  
(exception with mirror: She took a quick glance in the mirror.)  
You didn't laugh at his joke.  
I'm looking at the computer monitor.  
We rejoiced at his safe rescue.  
That pretty girl smiled at you.  
Stop staring at me.

- **Of** – with verbs approve, consist, and smell

I don't approve of his speech.  
My contribution to the article consists of many pages.  
He came home smelling of alcohol.

- **Of/About** – with verbs dream and think

I dream of finishing college in four years.  
Can you think of a number between one and ten?  
I am thinking about this problem.

- **For** – with verbs call, hope, look, wait, watch, and wish

Did someone call for a taxi?  
He hopes for a raise in salary next year.  
I'm looking for my keys.  
We'll wait for her here.

You go buy the tickets, and I'll watch for the train.  
If you wish for an 'A' in this class, you must work hard.

#### Frequently Misused Prepositions

Prepositions may sometimes be confused because of slang and the general informality of talk. Here are some frequently misused prepositions.

- *beside, besides* *Beside* means next to, whereas *besides* means in addition.

The comb is beside the brush.

Besides planning the trip, she is also getting the tickets.

- *between, among* Generally, *between* is used when two items are involved; with three or more, *among* is preferred.

Between you and me, he is among friends.

- *due to* *Due to* should not be used as a preposition meaning *because of*.

Because of (not due to) his speeding, we were all ticketed.

- *inside of* The *of* is always unnecessary.

Stay inside the house.

The man stayed outside (not outside of) the post office.

Based on the information from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/es/es1prop4.html>.

# SUBJECT VERB CONCORD

## STRUCTURE

- 1.0 Objective
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  - 1.2 Rules for Subject Verb Agreement
  - 1.3 Summary
  - 1.4 Key words
  - 1.5 Self Assessment Questions
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    - 1.5.2 Set – 2
  - 1.6 Suggested Readings
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### 1.0 Objective

The objective of this lesson is to teach the students to write grammatically correct sentences having a perfect harmony between the subject and the verb. After going through the lesson and practicing the rules of the concord, they will be able to avoid errors of verbs regarding their being singular or plural and use the correct number and person of the verb in a sentence.

### 1.1 Introduction

Concord literally means harmony, agreement. Thus, it means harmony between different members of a group. When we talk of sentences, concord means

harmony or agreement between different parts of a sentence, specially the subject and the verb.

Every sentence says something about a person or thing. The part of a sentence that names the person or thing is called Subject or the part, which gives us information about the Subject is called Predicate. The subject of a sentence thus has a close relation to what is being said in the Predicate. The form of the verb should be in direct relation to the number and person of the Subject.

## 1.2 Rules for Subject-Verb Agreement

- The verb must agree with the subject in Number and Person.
- If the subject is singular, the verb should also be singular.
- If the subject is plural, the verb should also be plural, e.g.,  
He is a good boy. (singular subject, singular verb)  
They are good players (plural subject, plural verb)
- When two or more singular subjects are joined together by 'and', plural verb is used. e.g.,  
Ram and Sham are playing a game. He and his friends have arrived.
- If two singular nouns refer to the same person or thing, the verb must be singular, e.g.,  
My friend and benefactor has come.  
By the death of Gokhale a great statesman and patriot was lost to India.

It should be noted that the article is used only once if the two nouns refer to the same person. If different persons were referred to, the article would be used before each noun and the verb would be plural, e.g.,

The orator and the statesman are dead.

- If two subjects together express one idea, the verb will be in the singular, e.g.,  
Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.  
Slow and steady wins the race.
- If singular subjects have 'each' or 'every' before them, the verb is usually singular.  
e.g.,  
Every man, woman and child was lost.  
Each day and each hour brings its duty.
- Two or more singular subjects connected by 'or', 'nor', 'either', 'neither' or 'nor' take a verb in the singular, e.g.,  
Neither Hari nor Ravi has come.  
No nook or corner was left unexplored.
- When the subjects joined by 'or', 'nor' are of different numbers, the verb must be plural, and the plural subject must be placed next to the verb. e.g.,  
Hari or his brothers have done this.  
Either the boy or his parents have gone there.
- When the subjects joined by 'or', 'nor' are of different persons, the verb agrees in person with the one nearest to it, e.g.,  
Either he or I am mistaken.  
Neither you nor he is to blame.

- A collective noun takes a singular verb when the collection is thought of as a whole. e.g.,

The counsel has chosen its president.

The fleet has set sail.

- It should however be kept in mind that if the individuals of which the collective noun is composed of are thought of, it can take a plural verb. e.g.,

The military work called out.

The crew were taken prisoners.

- Some nouns which are plural in form, but singular in meaning, take a singular verb,

e.g.,

The news is true.

Physics is a branch of natural science.

- When a plural noun counts between a singular subject and its verb, the verb used is singular in form. e.g.,

Each of the sisters is clever.

A variety of objects charms the eye.

The quality of the mangoes was not good.

- Words joined to a singular subject by with, together with, in addition to or as well as are parenthetical and therefore do not affect the number of verb. e.g.,

The chief, with all his men, was killed

Justice as well as mercy, allows.

- When the subject of the verb is a relative pronoun, care should be taken to see that the verb agrees in number and person with the antecedent of the relative. e.g.,

I, who am your friend, will guard your interest.



You, who are my friend, should not worry me.

- The title of a book, play, story, musical composition and the name of a country, even though plural in form take a singular verb, e.g.,  
Sons and Lovers is an interesting Novel.  
The United States of America is a developed country.

### 1.3 Summary

The basic rules for writing grammatically correct sentences have been discussed. In a sentence, the verb must agree with its subject with respect to its number and person.

### 1.4 Key words

Subject, verb, predicate, noun, pronoun, singular, plural.

### 1.5 Self Assessment Questions

#### 1.5.1 Set – 1

Fill in the blanks with correct form of the verb:

1. Two and two ..... four.
2. Bread and butter ..... take wholesome food.
3. Gulliver's travels ..... written by swift.
4. A good man and useful citizen .....passed away.
5. Each of the boys.....rewarded.
6. The jury.....divided in their opinion.
7. He is one of the authors who.....destined to be immortal.
8. Neither of the boys.....quite at his case.
9. The cost of these articles.....risen.
10. Every leaf and every flower.....stripped off the tree.
11. The horse and trap.....been waiting for a long time.

12. The Arabian Nights.....delighted many generations.
13. Kindness as well as justice.....to be our guide.
14. No news .....good news.
15. Forty yards .....a good distance.
16. The meeting .....chosen a president.
17. The public.....requested not to walk on the grass.
18. Iron as well as gold.....found in India.
19. Which one of these umbrellas.....yours?
20. To take pay and then not to do work.....dishonest.

### 1.5.2 Set – 2

Correct the following sentences:

1. Sita as well as Ram like fruit.
2. The owner of these houses are very clever.
3. There is eleven players in the ground.
4. Rice and curry are his favourite dish.
5. 'Great Expectations' are a good book.
6. Both of the books requires careful reading.
7. Neither Tina nor his friends is going there.
8. A doctor as well as a nurse are working in the hospital.
9. A doctor and a nurse is working in the hospital.
10. A number of books is missing.

### 1.6 Suggested Readings

J. Thomson & A. V. Martinet, *A Practical English Grammar for Foreign Students*, Oxford University Press, India 1963.

N.D.V Prasada Rao, *Learners' English Grammar and Composition*, S. Chand & Company Ltd, New Delhi, 1998.

Michael Swan, *Oxford Pocket Basic English Usage*, Oxford University Press, India, New Delhi, 1992

Raymond Murphy, *Intermediate English Grammar*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 1994

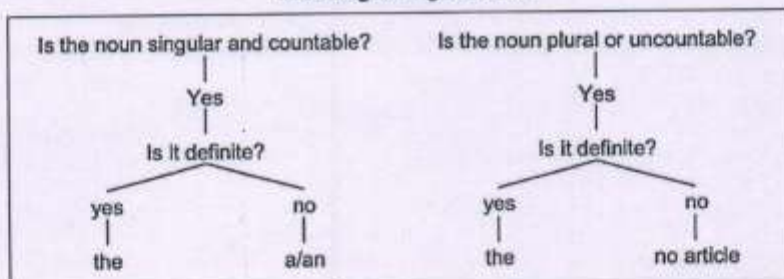
The words 'a', 'an' and 'the', known as articles, present problems for most speakers of English as an additional language. This is not surprising, since there is no equivalent construction in many languages, and those languages that do have articles do not necessarily use them in the same way as English.

## Introduction

It is often difficult to decide whether an English noun needs an article before it, and, if so, which article (a/an/the) to use. The main things to consider when choosing an article are whether or not the noun is countable, and whether it is definite. **Countability** means that the noun can be made plural, e.g. *book/books*. This is something you can check in a learner's dictionary of English. Whether a noun is definite or indefinite depends on whether you and your reader or listener both know what you are referring to. The following pages give you some guidelines on what makes a noun countable and/or definite. Much of the information is based on the work of Master (1986) and Swales and Feak (1994).

When you have to decide whether to use an article, and which article to use, consider this chart:

### Choosing the right article



#### For example:

*I bought a book* – *book* is a singular, countable noun; therefore it has to have an article.

Your reader does not know which book you are referring to, therefore it is 'indefinite'.

*The book I bought is interesting* – *book* is again a singular, countable noun; therefore it has to have an article. In this case, we know which book you are referring to (the book you bought), so it takes a definite article. (More details on the definite article are given below.)

*I like the books you gave me* – *books* is a plural noun. It is used in a definite sense (we know which books – the books you gave me), so it takes a definite article.

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*I like books* – books is a plural noun. It is used about books generally, not specific books, so it takes no article.  
*Blood is thicker than water* – blood and water are singular, uncountable nouns. They are used in a general sense, therefore they do not need an article.  
*I bought two books* – you do not need an article, because you already have the word two.  
*I bought some books* – you do not need an article, because you already have the word some.

### How do you know whether you need an article and which article to use?

A single, countable noun must have an article if there is no other number, determiner or possessive (e.g. *two, our, this*). If the noun is plural, an article may not be necessary. Look first at your noun:

*our house* – you do not need an article, because you already have the possessive *our*.  
*this year* – you do not need an article, because you already have the determiner *this*.  
*car* – you need an article, because this is a singular countable noun with no determiner already.  
*trees* – you may need an article, depending on whether the noun is definite or not.

#### For example:

*Trees are usually green* – no article is needed, because you are talking generally and the noun is not definite, i.e. you are not talking about specific trees.  
*The trees in the park are green* – the article is needed because you have specified which trees you are talking about.

### Indefinite article (a/an)

If the noun is singular and countable, and this is the first time you have mentioned it, then you will usually need the indefinite article:

*I bought a book* – we do not know which book.  
*There is a bird outside* – we do not know anything about the bird.

Measurements and rates also take the indefinite article: *Three times a week*

If the noun starts with a vowel sound, then the article *an* is used: *an ear, an uncle, an hour*  
If the noun starts with a consonant sound, then the article *a* is used: *a school, a university*

### Definite article (the)

If your reader or listener understands what you are referring to, then you will usually need the definite article:

*I bought a book last week. The book is about trees.*  
(You have just mentioned the book, so you both know which one.)  
*We went to a wedding yesterday. The bride wore a lovely dress.*  
(You have not mentioned the bride before, but you both know she is connected to the wedding.)

Some things are taken to be common knowledge in English and therefore take the definite article:  
Decades – *He was born in the 1920s.*

Currencies – *The dollar is getting stronger against the pound.*

Superlatives and ordinals – *The second book in the series is the best.*

Oceans, seas and many rivers – *The Nile flows into the Mediterranean.*

Plural or 'united' countries – *The Maldives are much smaller than the United States of America.*

Adjectives used as nouns – *The poor will always be a challenge for the rich in any country.*

Many organisations – *The World Health Organization has a detailed definition of health.*

A scientific categorisation – *The zebra is native to Africa.*

A symbol – *The Merlion is a symbol of Singapore.*

Unique people, places or things – *The prime minister said she would call a conference on changes affecting the earth's climate.*

Unique adjectives – *The same people always take the only parking spaces available.*

#### Other word patterns which take 'the':

Specific nouns modified by a relative clause – *The paintings (which are) in the gallery*  
Specific nouns followed by 'of'. This is a very common pattern - *The use of this procedure*  
Plural nouns preceded by 'of' – e.g. *Some of the paintings were interesting.*

**Common error:** You cannot write *most of paintings* or *none of paintings*.  
It is either *most of the paintings* (definite) or *most paintings* (general).  
*Most of the paintings in the exhibition were landscapes.*  
(definite – we know which specific paintings – they are in the exhibition)  
*Most paintings nowadays* (general – not specific paintings)

#### No article

We do not need an article if a noun is plural or uncountable and it is not definite.

*Women generally live longer than men.*

*Articles are difficult to use.*

*Paint is hard to remove.*

#### Exercise

Try this exercise, putting a/an/the in the blanks. If there should be no article, then place a \* in the blank. The answers and explanations follow.

Mr Coleman was (1) \_\_\_ very fastidious person. He lived three (2) \_\_\_ streets away from us, in (3) \_\_\_ small house with (4) \_\_\_ beautiful garden. Having taken early retirement from his (5) \_\_\_ job as (6) \_\_\_ button counter, he now had plenty of time to worry, and this he did very successfully. He often spent sleepless nights trying to figure out how he could successfully cook both sides of (7) \_\_\_ omelette without it breaking, or how he might achieve better access to (8) \_\_\_ tins at (9) \_\_\_ back of his cupboard. (10) \_\_\_ most of his home was exceptionally neat and tidy, but several loose cables behind (11) \_\_\_ television set bothered him, and he never quite knew what to do with (12) \_\_\_ empty plastic bags.

Then, one day, his life changed, and he began to experience some relief from his anguish. It seemed that other people underwent similar mental trials, for (13) \_\_\_ new catalogue appeared on his doorstep. (14) \_\_\_ catalogue contained solutions for many of his problems, and for others which had not yet given him any cause for concern. There was (15) \_\_\_ set of three egg timers, for example, shaped like (16) \_\_\_ chickens and designed to emit (17) \_\_\_ clucking sound at (18) \_\_\_ end of three, four and five minutes respectively. In this way he could cook (19) \_\_\_ eggs to suit each of his friends individually, and then keep them warm with (20) \_\_\_ specially designed covers which went with the timer, marked '3', '4' and '5' for identification purposes. And (21) \_\_\_ catalogue contained many other wonderful ideas, such as (22) \_\_\_ toaster which could be adjusted to produce different degrees of brownness on (23) \_\_\_ four slices toasted simultaneously, and (24) \_\_\_ photo frame that rotated pictures at (25) \_\_\_ touch of (26) \_\_\_ invisible button, so that visiting relatives would never be offended by not seeing their pictures on display, unless, of course, they all turned up together – Mr Coleman eventually solved this problem too by ordering four frames.

#### Answers

Mr Coleman was (1) a very fastidious person. He lived three (2) \* streets away from us, in (3) a small house with (4) a beautiful garden. Having taken early retirement from his (5) \* job as (6) a button counter, he now had plenty of time to worry, and this he did very successfully. He often

spent sleepless nights trying to figure out how he could successfully cook both sides of (7) an omelette without it breaking, or how he might achieve better access to (8) the tins at (9) the back of his cupboard. (10) \* Most of his home was exceptionally neat and tidy, but several loose cables behind (11) the television set bothered him, and he never quite knew what to do with (12) \* empty plastic bags.

Then, one day, his life changed, and he began to experience some relief from his anguish. It seemed that other people underwent similar mental trials, for (13) a new catalogue appeared on his doorstep. (14) The catalogue contained solutions for many of his problems, and for others which had not yet given him any cause for concern. There was (15) a set of three egg timers, for example, shaped like (16) \* chickens and designed to emit (17) a clucking sound at (18) the end of three, four and five minutes respectively. In this way he could cook (19) \* eggs to suit each of his friends individually, and then keep them warm with (20) the specially designed covers which went with the timer, marked '3', '4' and '5' for identification purposes. And (21) the catalogue contained many other wonderful ideas, such as (22) a toaster which could be adjusted to produce different degrees of brownness on (23) \* four slices toasted simultaneously, and (24) a photo frame that rotated pictures at (25) the touch of (26) an invisible button, so that visiting relatives would never be offended by not seeing their pictures on display, unless, of course, they all turned up together – Mr Coleman eventually solved this problem too by ordering four frames.

(Adapted from Haisley, J 2008, *The Good Samaritan*, Ginninderra Press, Adelaide)

### Explanations

(1)	a	singular, countable noun; first mention
(2)	no article	plural, countable noun; a number is used instead ('three streets')
(3)	a	singular, countable noun; first mention
(4)	a	singular, countable noun; first mention
(5)	a	singular, countable noun; first mention; someone's job
(6)	a	singular, countable noun; first mention
(7)	an	singular, countable noun; first mention
(8)	the	plural, countable noun; we know which tins (the tins at the back of his cupboard), so the noun is specific
(9)	the	singular, countable noun; specific noun followed by 'of'
(10)	no article	singular, countable noun; 'most of his home'
(11)	the	singular, countable noun; the writer is drawing you into the story, assuming that you know which television set is talked about, and that Mr Coleman only has one television set
(12)	no article	plural, countable noun; not specific
(13)	a	singular, countable noun; first mention
(14)	the	singular, countable noun; second mention. You know which catalogue, so it is now specific
(15)	a	singular, countable noun; first mention
(16)	no article	plural, countable noun; not specific
(17)	a	singular, countable noun; first mention
(18)	the	singular, countable noun; specific noun followed by 'of'
(19)	no article	plural, countable noun; not specific
(20)	the	singular, countable noun; we know which covers (the covers which went with the timer), so the noun is specific
(21)	the	singular, countable noun; second mention. You know which catalogue, so it is now specific

Legal obligation /official	MUST	<i>Police officer: 'You must wear a seatbelt.'</i>
Reporting a rule	BE SUPPOSED TO	<i>We are not supposed to speak Spanish in class.</i>
Personal necessity / obligation	HAVE TO / HAVE GOT TO	<i>I have to call my mom tonight.</i>
Possibility	CAN	<i>I can meet with you on Friday.</i>
Ability	CAN / BE ABLE TO	<i>I can play the piano. I'm able to speak Spanish.</i>
Permission	CAN / BE ALLOWED TO	<i>I can have a dog in my apartment.</i>
Past ability	COULD / WAS ABLE TO	<i>When I was a child, I could run for hours.</i>
Past permission	WAS ALLOWED / PERMITTED TO	<i>I wasn't allowed to stay up after 10pm.</i>
Advice	SHOULD	<i>You should call your mother on her birthday.</i>
Warning	HAD BETTER	<i>You had better study before the test [or you'll fail].</i>
A choice / not required	DON'T HAVE TO	<i>I don't have to wear a suit to work.</i>
Logical conclusion	MUST	<i>The teacher's absent. She must be sick.</i>
Certainty about the future	WILL	<i>I will call you tonight.</i>
Possibility / uncertainty about the future *adverb: MAYBE	MAY / MIGHT	<i>It might rain this evening. / It may rain this evening. Maybe it will rain this evening.</i>
Polite request	WOULD / COULD / CAN / WILL	<i>Could you open the door, please?</i>
Permission	MAY / CAN / COULD	<i>May I borrow your book?</i>
To express what you want	WOULD LIKE	<i>I'd like to take Grammar 4 next semester.</i>
Preference	WOULD RATHER	<i>I'd rather have coffee than tea.</i>