

Golden Rules of verb

Part 1

1) Two auxiliaries can be used with one principal verb, only when the form of the principal verb is appropriate to both the auxiliaries

The MD never has, and never will take such partial decisions

The MD never has taken, and never will take such partial decision

2) If there are two subjects in a sentence with different numbers, then both subjects should have their separate auxiliaries.

In the accident, three injured and one were killed.

In the accident, three *were* injured and one *was* killed

3) For two subjects one verb should be used, only if the form of the verb is same for both the subjects. Otherwise separate verbs should be used for each subject.

I am going to school and my sister home

I am going to school and my sister is going to home

4) When there are two principal verbs, auxiliary should be associated correctly with both

Two hundred aspirants have cleared the mains, only one failed

Two hundred aspirants have cleared the mains, only one has failed

5) A past tense in the main clause should be followed by Past tense in the subordinate clause.

He won the match because he practices well.

He won the match because he practiced well

Teacher said that gravity was pulling everything to earth's surface.

Teacher said that gravity is pulling everything to earth's surface

6) The auxiliary verb 'should' be used, when the subordinate clause comes after "lest". Irrespective of the verb tense in the main clause

Walk fast lest you shall miss the train

Walk fast lest you should miss the train

7) If "need or dare" is followed by "not", it turns into modal auxiliary. In that situation it takes bare infinitive and plural form cannot be used

This needs not be done

This need not be done

8) With the adverbs of Past time, past indefinite tense is used and not the present perfect tense is used.

I have done this work yesterday.

I did this work yesterday.

9) Modal Auxiliaries are not used together. But two auxiliaries can be connected by a conjunction.

He should must do it.

He should and must do it

10) An adverb or adverbial phrase should not come between "to" and the "infinitive part of the verb". (this is split infinitive)

I hoped to immediately reply to your letter

I hoped to reply immediately to your letter

11) For the action that began in the past and is still continuing, present perfect continuous tense should be used

How long are you eating this apple?

How long have you been eating this apple?

Part 2 (Subject verb agreement)

1) A subject will come before a phrase beginning with "of". This is a key rule for understanding subjects. The word "of" is the culprit in many, perhaps most, subject-verb mistakes.

The list of items **is/are** on the desk

2) Two singular subjects connected by or, either/or, or neither/nor require a singular verb

My aunt or my uncle **is/are** arriving by train today

Neither Raju nor Rahul **is/are** available

Either Neetu or Rishi **is/are** helping today with stage decorations.

3) The verb in an or, either/or, or neither/nor sentence agrees with the noun or pronoun closest to it.

Neither the plates nor the serving bowl **go/goes** on that shelf

Neither the serving bowl nor the plates **go/goes** on that shelf

4) If the singular subjects are preceded by each or every, the verb is usually singular.

Every boy and girl were ready

Every boy and girl was ready

5) Two and more singular subjects are connected by AND usually take a verb in the PLURAL

Hari and Ram is here

Hari and Ram are here

6) (A) Sometimes the subject is separated from the verb by such words as **along with, as well as, besides, not**, etc. These words and phrases are not part of the subject. Ignore them and use a **singular verb** when the subject is singular

The politician, along with the newsmen, **is/are** expected shortly.

Excitement, as well as nervousness, **is/are** the cause of her shaking

(B) Parentheses are not part of the subject

Raghu (and his trusty Ram) **was** always welcome

7) In sentences beginning with here or there, the true subject follows the verb

There **is/are** four hurdles to jump

There **is/are** a high hurdle to jump

Here **is/are** the keys

8) Use a singular verb with distances, periods of time, sums of money, etc when considered as a unit.

Three miles **is/are** too far to walk

Five years **is/are** the maximum sentence for that offence

Ten dollars **is/are** a high price to pay

Ten dollars (i.e., dollar bills) **was/were** scattered on the floor

9) When words that indicate portions eg **a lot, A**

majority, some, all-Rule 1 given earlier is reversed, and we are guided by the noun after **of**. If the noun after **of** is singular, use a singular verb. If it is plural, use a plural verb

A lot of the **pie has** disappeared

A lot of the **pies have** disappeared

A third of the **city is** unemployed

A third of the **people are** unemployed

10) When two singular nouns are joined by 'and' point out the same thing or person, the verb will be singular.

Rice and Pulse are grown in India. (Correct)

Rice and pulse is my favourite food. (Correct)

Bread and butter make a good break –fast.(Incorrect)

Bread and butter makes a good break –fast.(Correct)

The collector and the District Magistrate are on leave.

(Incorrect)

The collector and District Magistrate is on leave(correct)

11)The word **were** replaces **was** in sentences that expresses a wish or are contrary to fact

I wish it were Friday

12)If two singular nouns refer to the same person or thing, the verb must be singular.

The Founder and President are coming

The Founder and President is coming

(the use)

The founder and the president are coming (correct two persons)

13) The expression 'many a/an , more than one' should be followed by a singular noun and singular verb.

Many a man were drowned in the sea. (Incorrect)

Many a man was drowned in the sea. (Correct)

More than one students were absent in the class.(incorrect)

More than one student was absent in the class. (correct)

14). 'A great many' is always followed by a plural noun and a plural verb.

A great many student has been declared successful.
(Incorrect)

A great many students have been declared successful.
(correct)

15. The expression 'The number of + Plural noun' is followed by a 'singular helping verb' and the expression 'A number of + Plural Noun' is followed by 'Plural helping verb'.

The number of students are very small. (Incorrect)

The number of students is very small. (correct)

A number of books is missing. (Incorrect)

A number of books are missing. (correct)

A large number of boys were absent on account of bad weather. (✓)

The number of admissions have gradually fallen off . (×)

The number of admissions has gradually fallen off . (✓)