**Subject-verb agreement**

**Main points**

- With any writing, whether it is IELTS Writing Task 1 or Task 2, it is important that a verb agrees with its subject in number & person. This is called ‘agreement.’
- When this agreement is made, care must be taken to accurately identify the subject. Subjects may not always be obvious.

1. There are two main parts of a sentence: a subject (who or what) & a verb (action or condition).

In order for a sentence to be grammatically correct, the verb must agree with the subject in **number** (singular or plural) & **person** (1st - I, 2nd - you, 3rd - s/he, it, they). A singular subject (one person/thing) must take a singular verb, & a plural subject (two or more people/things), a plural verb.

- Singular: The table however, are irregular, & change in other persons.
- Plural: Generally, the verb form is the same for all persons with the exception of the 3rd person singular, which takes an ‘s’. The verbs ‘to be’ & ‘to have,’ however, are irregular, & change in other persons.

2. It may not always be obvious whether the subject is singular or plural. The table below lists a number of rules for subject-verb agreement using different subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb - singular</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>I study at 9am.</td>
<td>We study at 9am.</td>
<td>Three years is the length of the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>You study at 9am.</td>
<td>You study at 9am.</td>
<td>Two thousand dollars is the fee required for the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>S/He/It studies at 9am.</td>
<td>They study at 9am.</td>
<td>Two metres seems to be OK.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally, the verb form is the same for all persons with the exception of the 3rd person singular, which takes an ‘s’. The verbs ‘to be’ & ‘to have,’ however, are irregular, & change in other persons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULES FOR SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- He, she, it - always singular</td>
<td>It is sunny but cold today.</td>
<td>Three years is the length of the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- uncountable nouns - always singular; cannot be preceded by ‘a’ or ‘an’</td>
<td>The information is not available on the web.</td>
<td>Two thousand dollars is the fee required for the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a gerund, a phrase beginning with a gerund (~ing form) or a ‘to’-infinitive - singular</td>
<td>Studying English is easy.</td>
<td>Two metres seems to be OK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- subjects joined by ‘and’ - take plural</td>
<td>To learn another language is important.</td>
<td>Everyone attends the afternoon tutorials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The criteria seem to be reasonable for the assignment.
A Choose the correct verb to agree with its subject & complete the sentence.

1. There ................. several students absent from class today.  
   a) is  
   b) are  
   c) was

2. Neither ................. eligible to apply for the job.  
   a) were  
   b) are  
   c) is

3. The study found that the hypotheses ................. incorrect.  
   a) are  
   b) was  
   c) were

4. Neither the football nor the tennis matches ................. very interesting.  
   a) were  
   b) was  
   c) is

5. The kookaburra is an Australian bird which ................. on snakes.  
   a) are preying  
   b) preys  
   c) prey

6. The Olympic swimming team ................. selected a fortnight ago.  
   a) had  
   b) was  
   c) were

7. None of the questions ................. to the exam.  
   a) relate  
   b) relates  
   c) are relating

8. Knowing a subject well ................. a lot of study.  
   a) require  
   b) are requiring  
   c) requires

9. The percentage of male nurses entering the profession ................. increased.  
   a) are  
   b) has  
   c) have

10. Newspapers and magazines ................. students with a good source of reading material.  
    a) provide  
    b) provides  
    c) is providing

B Choose the subject a), b) or c) that agrees with the verb to complete the following sentences. There may be some sentences where two choices are correct.  
    **NOTE** Some statements are grammatically incorrect & so cannot be used. Write a), b) &/or c) in the blank.

1. ................. have voted for approval.  
   a) Australia, as well as China,  
   b) The Australian companies  
   c) The Australian

2. ................. were reduced during the takeover.  
   a) None of the company's profits  
   b) None of the company's wealth  
   c) None of the company's income

3. ................. are grown in Indonesia.  
   a) Many varieties of tea  
   b) Many varieties of spring flowers  
   c) Many variety of vegetable

4. ................. is accurate in assessing the problem.  
   a) Either the scientists or the astronomer  
   b) Either the scientist or the astronomers  
   c) Either the scientists or a astronomer

5. ................. speak Mandarin fluently.  
   a) Everybody  
   b) Both  
   c) Someone

6. ................. is required for enrolment.  
   a) A passport or offer letter  
   b) A passport  
   c) The passports

7. There are .................  
   a) several students who failed the test.  
   b) a foreign student who failed the test.  
   c) some student who failed the test.

8. ................. were quite serious.  
   a) The problems that the student faced  
   b) The problem that the students faced  
   c) A problem that a student faced

9. ................. is too much for that book.  
   a) Twenty-five dollars  
   b) One dollar  
   c) Five dollar

10. ................. works for the Time magazine  
    a) The journalist who wants to interview the directors  
    b) The journalists who want to interview the directors  
    c) The journalist which want to interview the director