

# Quick Clues to English

## LBCC Developmental Studies

### Subject-Verb Agreement

A **singular subject** refers to one thing, person, or idea. A **plural subject** refers to more than one thing, person, or idea.

**Examples:**

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Joanna</u> ran.	<u>Richard</u> and <u>Joanna</u> ran.
The <u>tiger</u> jumped.	The <u>tigers</u> jumped.
The <u>idea</u> is good.	The <u>ideas</u> were good.

A **singular subject** requires using the singular form of the verb.

**Examples:** My sister has two children  
The washing machine is making a funny noise.

HINT: A useful technique is to replace the subject with pronouns to test for the correct verb. For a singular subject, replace with *she, he, or it*.

**Examples:** She has two children sounds correct.  
It is making a funny noise sounds correct.

A **plural subject** requires using the plural form of the verb.

**Examples:** My cousins have two children.  
The bike's tires are both flat.

HINT: For a plural subject, replace with *they*.

**Examples:** They have two children" sounds correct.  
They are both flat" sounds correct.

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### Special Situations:

1. When compound subjects are joined by *and*, a plural verb is used.

**Examples:** Her computer skills **and** professional attitude make her a good candidate for the job.

Flour **and** sugar are essential for a cake.

2. Remember, a subject and verb are never part of a prepositional phrase.

**Examples:** The pile (of papers) was huge.

One (of the computers) is broken.

3. **When compound subjects are joined by *or, nor, or but also*, use the subject that is closer to the verb.**

**Examples:** Cake **or** cookies are for desert. (just *cookies*)

Neither cookies **nor** cake is being served. (just *cake*)

4. **The subject "you" always uses the plural verb whether it refers to one person or many people.**

**Examples:** Where are you from?

You all have the assignment.