

BBC Learning English

Grammar Challenge

Subject / Verb Agreement 2



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Gapfill – Subject / Verb Agreement 2

Here is the text of *Grammar Challenge – Subject / Verb Agreement 2*. Try to fill in the gaps, then listen and check your answers.

Hi Lee! In fact, there were 4 mistakes. The newsreader **should** have said: *...news **is** just in; a group of tourists **were** bitten... Rabies **is** a serious threat; everybody **is** in hospital.*

In English, singular subjects usually take (1) _____ verbs, and plural subjects take plural verbs.

My brother lives in Moscow, but my sisters live in St Petersburg

But some subjects can be tricky. Firstly, indefinite pronouns like *everybody*, and *everything* have a **plural (2)** _____, but take **singular verbs**. Listen:

Everybody is in hospital... nobody is safe

What's more, some (3) _____ which **end in -s** are actually **singular**, like *news*, *mathematics*, *physics*, *diabetes* and *rabies*. Listen:

Today's news is that rabies is on the increase.

But, words like *people*, *children*, *data* and *media* need a plural verb even though they (4) _____ end in *-s*.

The media have collected more data

Now a collective noun like *family*, *team*, *government* and *group* can be singular (5) _____ plural, since we can view it as a single group, or as a collection of individuals. We can say:

The team has worked well this year

Or:

The team have promised to work harder this year

So with this example:

*A group of tourists **were** bitten by a stray dog*

Each tourist was bitten individually. The dog didn't bite them all together in one big bite!

So to sum up: indefinite (6) _____ like *everybody and nothing*, take singular (7) _____. Some nouns which end with *-s*, like *news* and *diabetes* – are actually single. Other words like *data* and *media* are plural, and (8) _____ nouns like *government* and *group* can be single or plural.

Ok, that's all from me: good luck with your grammar challenge!

KEY

- (1) singular
- (2) meaning
- (3) nouns
- (4) don't
- (5) or
- (6) pronouns
- (7) verbs
- (8) collective