SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT RULES

GENERAL RULE:

A singular subject requires a singular verb.
A plural subject requires a plural verb.

Rule #1: Subjects and verbs must agree in number. This is the cornerstone rule that forms the background of the concept.

Rule #2: Don’t get confused by the words, phrases, or clauses that come between the subject and verb; they do not affect agreement.

Rule #3: The expression the number is followed by a singular verb while the expression a number is followed by a plural verb.

Rule #4: Sometimes the subject is separated from the verb by such words as along with, as well as, besides, not, together with, etc. These words and phrases are not part of the subject. Ignore them and use a singular verb when the subject is singular.

Rule #5: If two subjects are joined by and, they typically require a plural verb form.

Rule #6: The verb is singular if the two subjects separated by and refer to the same person or thing.

Rule #7: Two singular subjects connected by or, either/or, or neither/nor require a singular verb.

Rule #8: Plural verb is used if both parts of the compound subject connected by or or nor are plural.

Rule #9: The verb in an either/or, or neither/nor sentence agrees with the noun or pronoun closest to it.

Rule #10: Singular verb is used if the compound subject is preceded by the word each or every.
Rule #11: Singular indefinite pronouns always take a singular verb even though the meaning may seem plural.

These subjects always take singular verbs:
each  every  someone  either anyone  neither nobody  one  somebody  no one  anybody  everyone  everybody

Rule #12.a: Other indefinite pronouns can be either singular or plural depending on the noun they refer to. Either singular or plural: all, any, half, more, most, no, none, and some.

Rule#12.b: With words that indicate portions—e.g., a lot, a majority, some, all—if the noun after of is singular, use a singular verb. If it is plural, use a plural verb.

Rule #13: Several, many, both, few are plural words and take a plural verb.

Rule #14: In sentences beginning with here or there, the true subject follows the verb.

Hard-to-find Subjects
Rule #15: If the subject that comes after a verb is singular, the verb should be singular. If it is plural, the verb should be plural.

Rule #16: When the collective noun refers to a group as a unit, a singular verb is used.

Rule #17: When the collective noun refers to the individuals or items that make up the group, a plural verb is used.

Rule #18: Subjects with nouns that end in –s but have a singular meaning (such as branches of knowledge) take on singular verbs.

Rule #19: Some nouns with plural forms but singular in meaning take plural verbs.

Rule #20: Use a singular verb with distances, periods of time, sums of money, etc., when considered as a unit.

Rule #21: A title of a book, movie, work of art, etc. takes a singular verb even if it looks plural.
Rule #22: When using a relative pronoun (who, which, that, what, whatever, and whoever) to introduce a dependent clause, that verb in the clause should agree in number with the pronoun’s antecedent (the word to which the pronoun refers).

Rule #23.a: A noun expressing time, amount or measurement is normally singular.

Rule #23.b: If the unit of measurement refers to a number of individual items, then it is treated as a plural.

Rule #24: A number of plurals, mostly derived from Latin, do not end in -s. Nevertheless, they are plural and should be treated as such. Words such as criteria, phenomena, memoranda, and media are plural. Their singular forms are criterion, phenomenon, memorandum, and medium.

Rule #25: The word “were” replaces was in sentences that express a wish or are contrary to fact.

Adapted from: http://www.grammarbook.com/grammar/subjectVerbAgree.asp