

TEN-MINUTE GRAMMAR

VERB PROBLEMS

OBJECTIVES:

1. Students should understand that...
 - a. It is incorrect to change verb tenses in a passage without a reason.
 - b. A verb must match its subject in number—if the subject is singular, a singular verb should be used; and if the subject is plural, a plural verb must be used.
2. Students should be able to...
 - a. Write sentences that do not contain inappropriate shifts in verb tense.
 - b. Correct sentences and passages that contain inappropriate verb tense shifts.
 - c. Write sentences with correct subject-verb agreement.
 - d. Correct sentences that contain errors in subject-verb agreement.

LITERATURE:

This unit contains example selections from the novel *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* by Carrie Ryan.

The underlined verb in each of the following sentences is incorrect in some way. Explain **WHY** the verb is wrong and then write the correct verb:

1. A zombie named Bob live next door to our family.
2. He and his family isn't like the rest of our neighbors.
3. For starters, every day they wear the same clothes and went everywhere together.
4. Also, my mom and my dad doesn't know how to communicate with Bob because he mostly just grunts and growls.
5. Oh, and they always ate people for breakfast.

Label the following nouns and verbs as either **SINGULAR** or **PLURAL**:

6. Zombies
7. Human
8. Doesn't
9. Don't

Wordplay – Just for fun!

- **RHYME THYME:** Time to think like a rapper. How many rhymes can you come up with for the following word?

DEAD

“Subject-verb agreement” means that the verb matches the subject—so if the subject is plural, a plural verb must be used.

Choose the correct verb to give each sentence subject-verb agreement:

1. One of the cars (**is / are**) out of gas.
2. All the letters in that box (**need / needs**) to be thrown away.
3. The players and their team captain (**is / are**) nervous about the game.
4. Either my mom or my dad (**pick / picks**) me up every day.
5. My family (**has / have**) a lot of problems.
6. There (**is / are**) about a thousand things I need to do today.

Several incorrect tense shifts have been added to the following paragraph from The Forest of Hands and Teeth by Carrie Ryan. Change the underlined verbs so they're all in PRESENT TENSE as the author originally wrote it (if the verb is already in present tense, write OK):

On the seventh day, Cass doesn't come to sit with Travis, and I began to worry that something has happened to her. But then Harry came in her place and told me that it has become too much for her to bear, seeing Travis in so much pain.

Wordplay – Just for fun!

- **CATALOG CREATOR:** The root word “-nov-” means “new.” How many words can you list that contain this root?

In the following sentences, re-write the predicate so that the verb matches the new subject:

1. All of you are going to become zombies.
Each one you _____.
2. Every student eats lunch at school.
Some students _____.

Choose the correct verb to give each sentence subject-verb agreement:

3. My friend (**don't / doesn't**) like me anymore.
4. Jessica and her sister (**wasn't / weren't**) at school today.
5. There (**is / are**) many things you still need to learn.
6. There (**is / are**) a lot you still need to do.

The following paragraph has several incorrect tense shifts. Change the underlined verbs so that they're all in PAST TENSE (if the verb is already in past tense, just write OK):

I crossed the street and try to go into the clothing store. But the store is closed and looks completely deserted. I thought I have just come too late in the evening, but then I hear a pedestrian say, "That store went out of business last month!"

Wordplay – Just for fun!

- **COMBINATOR:** The vowel combination "ee" almost always sounds like the hard "E" in "feet." List as many words as you can that contain "ee."

Read the following excerpt from The Forest of Hands and Teeth by Carrie Ryan. Then answer the four questions below:

(a) I wonder if the girl in the picture knew what was coming—that
(b) the world would change so drastically. There is parts of me that
(c) wants to believe the photo were taken after the Return, that the
(d) mother and her daughter is still somehow safe.

1. In line (a), there are two verbs, one present tense and one past tense. Does this sentence have an incorrect tense shift?
2. In line (b), how would you rewrite the underlined part to make it have correct subject-verb agreement?
3. What is the verb problem in line (c), and how would you fix it?
4. What is the verb problem in line (d), and how would you fix it?

Using the proper proofreading marks, correct the six errors in this excerpt:

There is no people. No smoke rises from the houses the elaborate platforms in the trees is empty, the ladders lying in the dirt, their rungs covered in weeds. The world hear was silent.

Wordplay – Just for fun!

- **EIGHT BALL:** Create as many words as you can using three or more of the letters below (at least one eight-letter word is possible):

N E B H C R S A

REVIEW FOR TODAY'S QUIZ:

1. What does it mean if a sentence or paragraph has incorrect **tense shifts** in its verbs?
2. What is **subject-verb agreement**?
3. Is the verb used in the following sentences correct?
 - a. My friend **don't** want to go to the game with me.
 - b. James and his brother **wasn't** at practice yesterday.
 - c. A police officer and a criminal **have** conflicts with one another.
 - d. A bus or a train **is** a good way to get across town.
 - e. The committee **meet** every Tuesday night.
 - f. There **isn't** many cars in the parking lot.
4. Every student does his or her homework.
Some students _____.
5. How would you fix the **incorrect tense shifts** in the following paragraph?

I started the test and try to answer all the questions. But the test is very difficult and had over one hundred questions. I thought I have done really poorly, but then I get my test back and saw the big "A" on top, and I said to myself, "I will pass this class now!"

Choose the correct verb to give each sentence subject-verb agreement:

1. A human and a chimpanzee (**has / have**) very similar DNA.
2. A gun or an axe (**is / are**) useful during a zombie invasion.
3. The team (**practices / practice**) every day after school.
4. There (**isn't / aren't**) many cookies left.

In the following sentences, re-write the predicate so that the verb matches the new subject:

5. Neither one of you plays basketball very well.

Both of you _____.

6. Everybody needs to come to the meeting.

Nobody _____.

Several incorrect tense shifts have been added to the following paragraph from The Forest of Hands and Teeth by Carrie Ryan. Change the underlined verbs so they're all in PRESENT TENSE as the author originally wrote it (if the verb is already in present tense, write OK):

She doesn't get too far before she dropped to her knees and began to sob, great heaving wails that seem to be echoed by the Unconsecrated pushing against the fences surrounding us. Finally, Jed stood and walks to her. At first she holds a hand up as if to push him away, but he didn't allow it.

Wordplay – Just for fun!

➤ **DESCRAMBLER:** Try to sort out the five scrambled words below:

AWPS NDURE NGWIRE EETWNEB IECUSANN

Read the following excerpt from The Forest of Hands and Teeth by Carrie Ryan. Then answer the four questions below:

(a) A protest hover at my lips, but her eyes scare me into silence. (b) I wondered if we'll ever be friends again, or if this will be the end of us. (c) Of course we'll always be civil—the village is too small to feud—but will we share fully with each other as we did before?

1. Which verb in sentence (a) has incorrect subject-verb agreement?
2. Find a subordinating conjunction in sentence (b).
3. Which word in sentence (c) is a helping verb?
4. Which verb in the paragraph is an example of an incorrect tense shift (there is only one)?

Using the proper proofreading marks, correct the six errors in this excerpt:

“There aren’t anything to go back too,” Jed says, his voice the tone of finality.

You don’t know that,” Cass says. Her voice was growing higher-pitched, more desperate. “You cant know that”

Wordplay – Just for fun!

- **FIXER-ROOTER:** How many words can you think of that have the same prefix, suffix, or root as the multisyllabic word below?

TELESCOPIC (TELE / SCOP / IC)

(capable of magnifying distant objects)

Read the following excerpt from The Forest of Hands and Teeth by Carrie Ryan. Then answer the questions below:

(a) My entire life have been about the world outside the fence line,
(b) has been about the Forest. Of course I have wondered if there is
(c) anything past the Forest, if anything else survived the Return or if
(d) my mother's stories was true and an entire world existed before
(e) the Return. We have never even known if there are a fence on
the other side of the trees.

1. How would you fix the verb problem in line (a)?
2. Is the "has been" in line (b) a present perfect verb phrase or a present progressive verb phrase?
3. Is the "there is" in line (b) correct, or should it be "there are"?
4. Starting in line (c), the verbs in the passage change from present tense to past tense. Is this an incorrect tense shift?
5. How would you fix the verb problem in line (d)?
6. What is the verb problem in line (e)?

Wordplay – Just for fun!

- **ANAGRAM:** Rearrange the letters in the nonsense phrase below to create new words that actually make sense.

DESTINY LAW

(Hint: cartoon creator)

Name:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

There is no people. No smoke rises from the houses the elaborate platforms in the trees is empty, the ladders lying in the dirt, their rungs covered in weeds. The world hear was silent.

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DAY
SIX

VERB PROBLEMS

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NAME:

PERIOD:

“Singular” means only one; “plural” means more than one.

Identify the following nouns as SINGULAR or PLURAL:

1. _____ Cats and dogs 3. _____ Women 5. _____ Problem
2. _____ Statue 4. _____ Magazines 6. _____ Headphones

Present tense verbs (and a few past tense verbs like “was” and “were”) have a plural form and a singular form. With regular verbs, the singular form of a verb ends in –s while the plural form leaves the –s off.

Identify the following verbs as SINGULAR form or PLURAL form:

7. _____ Fight 9. _____ Was 11. _____ Has eaten
8. _____ Does 10. _____ Work 12. _____ Are running

When a sentence has two subjects connected by “and,” use a plural-form verb. But if the two subjects are connected by “or,” use the singular form.

In each sentence, choose the correct verb so that the subject and verb agree:

13. A zombie and a vampire (**has / have**) a few things in common.
14. Either Mom or Dad (**is / are**) going to pick me up after the concert.
15. Mike and his friend both (**plays / play**) for the high school basketball team.

Collective nouns like “team,” “class,” and “committee” are singular nouns even though they include more than one person. Use a singular-form verb with collective nouns unless you are talking about more than one group.

In each sentence, choose the correct verb so that the subject and verb agree:

16. Mr. Johnson’s class (**does / do**) ten minutes of grammar work every day.
17. My favorite band (**practices / practice**) in that basement.
18. Both teams (**wins / win**) more games than they lose.

The following words are ALWAYS connected to a singular-form verb:

Neither, Each, Every, Nobody, Someone

But these words are ALWAYS connected to a plural-form verb:

Both, Some, All, None

In each sentence, choose the correct verb so that the subject and verb agree:

19. Each of you (**need / needs**) to turn your assignment in on time.

20. Some (**say / says**) that money doesn't buy happiness.

21. Nobody ever (**ask / asks**) questions in that class.

Use these verbs with singular subjects: *Does, Doesn't, Is, Isn't, Was, Wasn't*

But use these with plural subjects: *Do, Don't, Are, Aren't, Were, Weren't*

In each sentence, choose the correct verb so that the subject and verb agree:

22. My grandma (**doesn't / don't**) like it when I say swear words.

23. The women in the choir (**wasn't / weren't**) singing very loudly tonight.

24. Those teenagers (**isn't / aren't**) doing what they should be doing.

“There is” should always be followed by a singular object whereas “There are” should be followed by a plural object.

In each sentence, choose the correct verb so that the subject and verb agree:

25. There (**is / are**) millions of ways to earn a living.

26. Ever since the car crash, there (**is / are**) several things I can't do anymore.

27. There (**is / are**) only one guy for every two girls in my cooking class.

The pronouns “I,” “We,” and “You” are strange. All three of them take plural-form verbs (without the -s) even though “I” is singular and “You” can be singular or plural.

In each sentence, choose the correct verb so that the subject and verb agree:

28. You (**eat / eats**) too much, and you don't exercise enough.

29. After the dance, we (**was / were**) very tired.

30. Either you or I (**need / needs**) to return the movie before they charge us a late fee.

NAME:

PERIOD:

PRESENT TENSE VERBS — the plural form is just the basic verb with no added ending or helping verb; add an –s for singular form

PAST TENSE VERBS — add an –ed for regular verbs

FUTURE TENSE VERBS — use the helping verb “will” with the basic verb

Read the following passage from the book The Forest of Hands and Teeth by Carrie Ryan. The underlined verbs in this passage are all in PRESENT TENSE. Below re-write the verbs to make them all PAST TENSE; then re-write them a second time in FUTURE TENSE:

The Guild of Guardians and the Sisters try to calm the swelling panic, telling us that the fast Unconsecrated aren't new. At one of our events Sister Tabitha stands, flanked by the two highest-ranking Guardians. The villagers spread out before her, their hands tight on their children, their eyes darting toward the fences. The air is thick with their fear and I can feel my muscles tense with the strain of it all.

PAST TENSE:

The Guild of Guardians and the Sisters _____ to calm the swelling panic, telling us that the fast Unconsecrated _____ not new. At one of our events Sister Tabitha _____ flanked by the two highest-ranking Guardians. The villagers _____ out before her, their hands tight on their children, their eyes darting toward the fences. The air _____ thick with their fear and I _____ feel my muscles tense with the strain of it all.

FUTURE TENSE:

The Guild of Guardians and the Sisters _____ to calm the swelling panic, telling us that the fast Unconsecrated _____ not new. At one of our events Sister Tabitha _____ flanked by the two highest-ranking Guardians. The villagers _____ out before her, their hands tight on their children, their eyes darting toward the fences. The air _____ thick with their fear and I _____ feel my muscles tense with the strain of it all.

An “incorrect tense shift” is when you change from one verb tense to another without any reason. There are some situations in which two different tenses might be used in the same sentence, such as when a person talks in the PRESENT about something he will do in the FUTURE. But in general, the verbs in a passage should all be the same tense—either past, present, or future.

Read the book passages below, paying special attention to the underlined verbs. In the box after each verb, rewrite the verb to correct any incorrect tense shifts (if it's already correct, write OK):

Sister Tabitha climbs the stairs slowly, her body hunching as she neared the door in the ceiling. She used three keys to unlock it and then comes back down, leaving it closed. “This is where the well house once stood ,” she told me, pushing me up the steps so that I almost trip . I crouched , my back against the rough wood door above me, its metal bands digging into my skin. I had known the Sisters to be stern before, doling out physical punishments when necessary during our lessons. But I have never known them like this, rough and distant and frightening.

The next book passage is tricky because it correctly uses all three tenses. So pay special attention to WHEN each action takes place, and then make any necessary corrections in the boxes:

My heart pounded as I think of the tunnel under the Cathedral and the clearing in the Forest, and I nodded . Sister Tabitha tucks a strand of hair back from my face, her hand resting on my cheek the way my mother did . “I am trying to keep you safe, but you must help me. I can see now that it is no longer enough to keep you trapped here in the Cathedral. Maybe I was wrong to keep you from the village. Your solitude was over. You may leave this building. But remember that I will be watching you.”

QUIZ

VERB PROBLEMS

NAME:

PERIOD:

Match the following terms with the correct explanation:

1. Incorrect tense shift _____
2. Subject-verb agreement _____
 - A. When a subject or verb is spelled incorrectly, it should be fixed
 - B. If a subject is plural, a plural verb must be used
 - C. It is wrong to change tenses in a passage for no reason

Which answer identifies the best way to correct the underlined verb?

3. The bus comes to pick us up at 7:15, but my little brother and sister usually isn't ready on time.
 - A. weren't
 - B. aren't
 - C. NO CHANGE
4. Most of the people who work at that factory need to find new jobs.
 - A. needs
 - B. needing
 - C. NO CHANGE
5. The city council have tried to solve that problem many times, but the solutions always fail.
 - A. has
 - B. NO CHANGE

QUIZ

VERB PROBLEMS

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1. Incorrect tense shift _____
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 - B. NO CHANGE

Choose the correct verb from the two options:

6. A dog and a cat (**don't / doesn't**) get along very well.
7. I saw the first zombie and (**run / ran**) for my life.
8. All the toys in that box (**need / needs**) to be repaired.
9. Either you or your friend (**is / are**) going to have to go.
10. Jess waves and says, "Hi." I (**turn / turned**) bright red.
11. One of the racers (**wasn't / weren't**) ready to race.
12. There (**is / are**) several days left until the end of the year.

In the following sentences, re-write the predicate so that the verb matches the new subject:

13. All of you have to pay for dinner.
One of you _____.
14. Each player on the team practices her hardest.
Some players on the team _____.
15. Everybody needs to walk toward the exit.
Nobody _____.

In the box after each verb, rewrite the verb to correct any incorrect tense shifts (if it's already correct, write OK):

I heard the bell ring and try to open my locker as quickly as I could. Then I race down the hall and plunged through the door of my English class. I thought I have made it just on time, but then I hear Mrs. Benson say, "Looks like it will be tardy detention for you!"

Choose the correct verb from the two options:

6. A dog and a cat (**don't / doesn't**) get along very well.
7. I saw the first zombie and (**run / ran**) for my life.
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Match the following terms with the correct explanation:

1. Incorrect tense shift _____
2. Subject-verb agreement _____
 - A. If a subject is plural, a plural verb must be used
 - B. It is wrong to change tenses in a passage for no reason

Which answer shows the best way to correct the underlined verb?

3. The bus comes to pick us up at 7:15, but my little brother and sister usually isn't ready on time.
 - A. aren't
 - C. NO CHANGE
4. Most of the people who work at that factory need to find new jobs.
 - A. needs
 - B. NO CHANGE
5. The city council have tried to solve that problem many times, but the solutions always fail.
 - A. has
 - B. NO CHANGE

CIRCLE the correct verb from the two options:

6. A dog and a cat (**don't** / **doesn't**) get along very well.
7. I saw the first zombie and (**run** / **ran**) for my life.
8. All the toys in that box (**need** / **needs**) to be repaired.

9. Either you or your friend (**is / are**) going to have to go.

10. Jess waves and says, “Hi.” I (**turn / turned**) bright red.

11. One of the racers (**wasn’t / weren’t**) ready to race.

12. There (**is / are**) several days left until the end of the year.

In the following sentences, RE-WRITE the verb so it matches the new subject:

13. All of you **have** to pay for dinner.

One of you _____ to pay for dinner.

14. Each player on the team **practices** her hardest.

Some players on the team _____ their hardest.

15. Everybody **needs** to walk toward the exit.

Nobody _____ to walk toward the exit.

In the box below each verb, choose the correct answer from the box—if the verb in the sentence is wrong, CIRCLE the other verb choice; but if the verb is already correct, CIRCLE “OK”:

I heard the bell ring and **try** to open my locker as quickly as I could. Then I

tried / OK

race down the hall and **plunged** through the door of my English class. I

raced / OK

plunge / OK

thought that I **have** made it just on time, but then I **hear** Mrs. Benson say,

think / OK

had / OK

heard / OK

“Looks like you **will have** tardy detention tomorrow!”

had / OK

NAME:

PERIOD:

When you're checking for subject-verb agreement, figure out whether the subject is singular or plural and then make sure the verb matches.

In each sentence, decide if the subject is singular or plural and then choose the correct verb:

1. My mom comes to pick us up from school at 3:30, but **my little brother and sister** usually (isn't / aren't) ready on time.

Singular or Plural?



2. **Most of the students** who go to this school (**needs / need**) to work harder on assignments.



Singular or Plural?

3. **The government** (**has / have**) tried to balance the budget many times but have always failed.



Singular or Plural?

Read each example sentence and then answer the questions that follow:

A cat and a mouse (**don't / doesn't**) like each other very much.

6. What is the subject of the sentence?

a. a cat and a mouse

b. a cat

c. a mouse

7. Is the subject singular or plural?

a. Singular

b. Plural

8. Which verb matches the subject?

a. don't

b. doesn't

All the cars on the lot (**need / needs**) to be sold immediately.

9. What is the subject of the sentence?

a. all the cars

b. the lot

10. Is the subject singular or plural?

a. Singular

b. Plural

11. Which verb matches the subject?

a. need

b. needs

Either Mike or Susan (**is / are**) going to have to work the night shift.

12. What is the subject of the sentence?

a. Mike and Suzan

b. Mike OR Suzan,
not both (just one)

13. Is the subject singular or plural?

a. Singular

b. Plural

14. Which verb matches the subject?

a. is

b. are

An “incorrect tense shift” is when you change from one verb tense to another without any reason. There are some situations in which two different tenses might be used in the same sentence, such as when a person talks in the PRESENT about something he will do in the FUTURE. But in general, the verbs in a passage should all be the same tense—either past, present, or future.

In the box after each verb, rewrite the verb to correct any incorrect tense shifts (if it’s already correct, write OK):



Use this verb as a clue. Is it **present** or **past** tense?

I walk to the bus stop and waited for the bus to arrive. But the driver showed up late and then skipped my stop altogether. I run down the street after it, but the bus was already gone. I took a deep breath and started walking. All I can think was , “Looks like I will be late to class!”



Use this verb as a clue. Is it **present** or **past** tense?

Jesse went to football practice and worked his hardest. But the coach says Jesse has missed too many practices lately and would have to sit on the bench that week. Jesse thought the coach is being unfair, but he decided to just keep working hard. He says to himself, “It was alright. I will play in the game next week.”