SINGULAR OR PLURAL

The singular form of a noun indicates that you are referring to one person, place or thing. When you would like to refer to more than one, you must use the plural form of the noun. Only nouns that can be separated into units and counted can be made plural. For example, we can count things like books, people, days, etc. therefore they can be either singular or plural.

The box is full of dishes. We have one box, but more than one dish.

Non-countable nouns cannot be divided into separate elements and counted. Non-count nouns are items that exist as a mass, like milk, water and grass. They can also be concepts such as information, justice, or music. Non-countable nouns do not have a plural form; they are always considered singular.

Clean air is vital to human health. Air cannot be counted therefore it is singular.

Subject/Verb Agreement with Singular/Plural Subjects

A singular subject must always have a singular verb, and a plural subject will have the plural form of the verb.

Lucy paints houses for a living. (singular subject and verb)
Brian’s brothers paint houses for a living. (plural subject and verb)

When two singular subjects are joined by and, use the plural form of the verb.

Tian and Mengying are coming on the ski trip.

When two singular subjects are connected by or, use the singular form of the verb.

The pen or the pencil is on my desk.

Is the subject singular or plural?

The subject will not be found in a modifying phrase.

One (of the students) was late. of the students is a modifying phrase.
The people (who voted for Barack Obama) are happy with the outcome.
The test, (covering chapters 1-3), is on Monday.

When the subject is each, either, someone, everybody, everyone, use the singular form of the verb.

Each of the students submits a report.
Either of the answers is correct.
Someone is responsible for the damage to the table.

Non-specific nouns, generally refer to groups or categories of people, places or things. Although they often refer to more than one of something, they require a singular verb.

The team practices every Tuesday morning.
The rainforest is being depleted.
Parliament meets in Ottawa.