

Special Nouns and Verb Agreement: -S Endings and Group Concepts

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: Academic subjects (-ics endings), Gymnastics and athletics, News as an uncountable singular noun, Identical singular and plural forms, A means vs. many means, Quantifying biological species, Mandatory plural verb agreement, Singular forms (police officer, policeman), Common errors with 'the police is', Sums of money (pounds/dollars)

In English, most nouns ending in **-s** are plural. However, there are several important exceptions where nouns ending in **-s** are singular, or where specific group nouns require plural verbs despite not ending in **-s**.

1. Nouns Ending in -ICS and Activities (Singular)

Nouns referring to academic subjects, sciences, and certain sports ending in **-ics** or **-s** are usually **uncountable** and take a **singular verb**.

- **Examples:** *Mathematics, Physics, Economics, Politics, Gymnastics, Athletics.*
 - *Mathematics **is** my favorite subject.* (NOT: ~~are~~)
 - *Gymnastics **looks** difficult.*

2. The Word "News" (Singular)

Although it ends in **-s**, the word **news** is uncountable and always singular.

- *The news **is** on TV at 6:00 PM.* (NOT: ~~are~~)
- *This news **was** shocking.*

3. Identical Singular and Plural Forms (Variable)

Some nouns end in **-s** in both their singular and plural forms. The verb changes depending on the context (determiners like *a, this, these, many*).

- **Series:** *This TV series **is** funny. / These TV series **are** funny.*
- **Species:** *One species **is** extinct. / Many species **are** endangered.*
- **Means:** *The bus **is** a means of transport. / All means of transport **are** busy.*

4. "The Police" (Always Plural)

The noun **police** refers to the organization or the group of officers. It is **always plural**.

- *The police **are** investigating the crime.* (NOT: ~~is~~)
- *The police **have** arrived.*

Note: If you want to talk about one person, use **a police officer** or **a policeman/policewoman**.

- *A police officer **is** standing there.*

5. Measurements, Time, and Money (Singular Concepts)

When we talk about an amount of money, a period of time, or a distance as a **single unit** or total sum, we use a **singular verb**.

- *Fifty pounds **is** too expensive for a t-shirt.* (We view the price as one total sum).
- *Two weeks **is** not enough time for a holiday.*
- *Ten kilometers **was** a long distance to walk.*

Practice Exercises

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the verb in brackets.

Instructions:

- Pay attention to whether the subject is singular or plural based on the rules on Page 1.
- For **negative** sentences, use the auxiliary (do/does/is/are) + not.
- For **questions**, place the auxiliary verb correctly before the subject.

1. Physics _____ (be) a fascinating subject, but I find it difficult.
2. The police _____ (not/know) who stole the painting yet.
3. _____ (be) gymnastics popular in your country?
4. The news usually _____ (start) at 6:00 PM on this channel.
5. One hundred dollars _____ (not/be) a lot of money for a new phone these days.
6. _____ (do) these species of birds migrate in the winter?
7. That new TV series _____ (look) very interesting.
8. A police officer _____ (not/work) alone during dangerous missions.
9. Where _____ (be) the police taking the suspect?
10. Athletics _____ (require) a lot of discipline and training.
11. Five years _____ (not/seem) like a long time when you are having fun.
12. _____ (be) mathematics difficult for you at school?
13. The internet is a powerful _____ (means) of communication.
14. The police _____ (stop) cars on the main road right now.
15. _____ (do) the news mention the weather for tomorrow?

Answer Key

1. **is** (Physics = singular academic subject)
2. **do not know / don't know** (The police = plural noun)
3. **Is** (Gymnastics = singular sport)
4. **starts** (The news = singular uncountable)
5. **is not / isn't** (Money sum = singular concept)
6. **Do** (These species = plural context)
7. **looks** (That series = singular context)
8. **does not work / doesn't work** (A police officer = singular countable)
9. **are** (The police = plural noun)
10. **requires** (Athletics = singular sport)
11. **does not seem / doesn't seem** (Time period = singular concept)
12. **Is / Was** (Mathematics = singular academic subject)
13. **means** (Noun remains 'means' in singular; no verb to fill here, but context implies 'is a means') *Note: If the gap intended a verb, it was covered by 'is' in the sentence prompt. If the gap was identifying the noun form, 'means' is correct.*
14. **are stopping** (The police = plural noun; Present Continuous)
15. **Does** (The news = singular uncountable)