



Subject-Verb Agreement and “of”

(Subject-Verb Agreement part 2)

If a noun phrase begins with “of,” the verb will *usually* agree with the noun before “of.” If the noun is singular, the verb that follows it will take a singular form; if it is plural the verb that follows it will take a plural form.

A **book** of poems **makes** a lovely gift. (“A book” is singular, so we say, “makes.”)

A **book** of poetry **makes** a lovely gift. (The subject, “book,” is still singular)

Books of poetry **sell** better near Valentine’s Day. (Here, the subject is plural, so the verb now agrees with the plural form.)

There is an exception to this. If you are talking about something that you are measuring and are referring to the **total** of the measured amount, we often use a singular verb form: we say, “Two cups of coffee is too much for me,” for example, and not, “two cups are,” because we are referring to the total. However, if we are talking about how “two cups of coffee are on the counter,” this is referring to two individual cups, not two cups in total, so we treat it as plural.

Otherwise, the pattern holds true for any determiner or quantifier which includes an “of”: **the subject must match the determiner or quantifier in number.** “One of,” “each of,” “every one of,” “each and every one of,” “either of,” “neither of,” “the first of,” and “the last of” are all singular, so whether the following noun is singular or plural, the verb takes a singular form:

One of our planes **is** missing.

Each of these tomatoes **has** a bruise.

Do either of your sisters want to have lunch with me?

Sorry, **neither** of them **is** available today.

The **first** of the questions today **is**, “why are you here?”

On the other hand, “many of,” “several of,” “a few of,” “a bunch of,” “two or three of,” “both of,” and “a large number of” are all used with plural, countable nouns, and plural verbs:

Many of the strikers **have** been discussing returning to the bargaining table.

Several of them **are** very tired of being on the picket line.

A **few** of them, however, **are** very vocal about holding out for a better offer.

Two of the union reps, Marcia and JinHee, **are** meeting to discuss the situation.

Both of them **want** the strike to end as soon as possible.

It gets tricky, however, since some quantifiers and determiners can be used with singular, plural, and uncountable nouns. “All of,” “any of,” “some of,” “none of,” “most of,” and “a lot of” do not reveal whether the verb should match a singular or plural form. In these cases, the verb agrees with the noun after “of,” since it is the only noun that indicates number:

Are any of these **exercises** useful?

Is any of this **chapter** confusing?

Some of **us** **are** going out for sushi after work.

Some of **the paper** in this pile **is** unlined.

Most of our **computers** still **have** CD players.



Most of my **time is** spent surfing the internet.
A lot of the **ice cream has** melted.
A lot of the **apples have** spots.

“A little of” and “little of,” however, are only used with non-count nouns (treated as singular):

Very **little** of my **time** is spent exercising, to be honest.

“Much of” is similar. The verb always agrees with a singular form:

Much of the class **has** been spent discussing algebra.
Is there **much** of that cheesecake left?
Sorry, there **isn't much** of it left.

Exercise: Correct the errors! Some sentences are okay. Only change the verbs!

1. Several cups of coffee are sitting on the counter.
2. Two cups of coffee in the morning is enough to affect my sleep.
3. I think that some of these chocolates has nuts in them.
4. I think that some of this chocolate has gone bad.
5. I think that some of these chocolates has gone bad.
6. I think that one of these chocolates are poisoned.
7. Do any of the questions on this worksheet confuse you?
8. Does any of the answers on this worksheet confuse you?
9. Does any of the video show him in his Hallowe'en costume?
10. This box of chocolates are really expensive.
11. Three members of the hockey team is waiting for you outside.
12. A school of fish is swimming in the stream.
13. Not much of the forest has been spared by the fire.
14. Many of the trees has been badly damaged.
15. Most of my holidays was spent relaxing at home.
16. Most of the toys that I bought the cat is under the couch.
17. A few of them is by her food bowl.
18. Five rolls of fabric is being sent by train.
19. Five rolls of fabric is more than I need for this project.
20. Does any of your friends have a car they can lend us?
21. Will any of the test involves fractions?
22. There is three cases of sparkling water in the fridge.
23. Are either of the classes she teaches being offered this term?
24. Is both of the classes she teaches being offered this term?
25. A lot of your mistakes are matters of subject-verb agreement.
26. A lot of your grammar are good, but you could use extra practice on agreement.
27. Are everyone okay?
28. Is all of the money gone?
29. Are a lot of your friends coming to the party?
30. There are not very much of the cheesecake left, I'm afraid.
31. Each of the contestants get a prize.
32. A gift of flowers are always welcome.



1 Correct 2. Correct 3. have 4. Correct 5. have 6. Is 7. Correct 8. Do 9. Correct 10 is 11. are 12. Correct 13. Correct 14. have 15. were 16. are 17 are 18. are 19. is ("are" is also acceptable). 20 Do 21. involve 22. are 23 Is 24 Are 25. Correct 26. is 27. Is 28. Correct 29 Correct. 30. is 31. gets 32. is



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