One of the most important grammatical issues to focus on when writing is making sure the subject and verb agree. However, it is sometimes difficult to know whether to use a singular verb or a plural verb. Fortunately, there are ways to determine which type of verb is needed.

Step One: Match the Verb and Noun - Before deciding whether a singular or plural verb is needed, a writer must identify which noun and verb should agree.

- Example: The dog runs quickly.
  - Dog is the noun, and the verb runs must agree with it.
- Example: The dog, recently adopted from the pound, is cute.
  - Dog is the noun, and the verb is must agree with it.
- Example: There are four dogs in the backyard.
  - Dogs is the noun, and the verb are must agree with it.

Rules for Subject-Verb Agreement

- Use a singular verb with a singular subject.
  - The athlete trains every day.
- Use a plural verb with a plural subject.
  - The athletes train every day.
- Sentences with or/nor use a singular verb.
  - Either Michael or Brett plays starting forward.
- Sentences with and use a plural verb.
  - Caleb and Dan run track after school.
- Use a singular verb with units of distance and time.
  - Nine innings is the usual length of a baseball game.
- Collective nouns use singular verbs when referring to the whole unit.
  - The team plays twenty games in the regular season.
- Collective nouns use plural verbs when referring to individual members of the group.
  - The team must sign a release form before the season starts.
- Use were to indicate a wish.
  - If it were the playoffs, the team would be in first place.