

LOOKING AT YOURSELF AS A WRITER

Subject-verb agreement

Subject-verb agreement causes trouble for most of us, largely because of the many tricky contexts that tempt us to choose the wrong verb. But if you find subject-verb agreement unusually troublesome, consider possible sources of your difficulties.

CAUSE You are confused about the rules on when to use the -s form of a verb. For example, you may think that a “plural” verb takes an -s ending, just like most plural nouns. Or you may think that all singular subjects demand a verb with an -s ending, not just third-person singular subjects.

CURE Trust the chart on page 152. Don’t let yourself get confused by half-learned rules.

CAUSE You can’t find the simple subject of the sentence (or clause).

CURE You are at a serious disadvantage as a writer if you cannot find the subject of a sentence. Turn to B2-a for help. If you need more practice, check with your instructor or a writing center tutor.

CAUSE You aren’t sure whether the subject is singular or plural.

CURE Look up the appropriate rule in G1. There is no need to memorize all of these rules; just know where to find them.

See also “Looking at Yourself as a Writer: Problems with -s endings on verbs.”