

University of Tikrit

College of Education for Humanities

Department of English

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English Grammar

Concord in English

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1. Introduction

One of the fundamental principles governing English sentence structure is concord, also known as agreement. Concord refers to the grammatical relationship between two elements in a sentence whereby one element determines the form of another.

The most common example is the relationship between the subject and the verb:

- The student writes carefully.
- The students write carefully.

The form of the verb changes according to the number of the subject. Similarly, pronouns often agree with their antecedents in person, number, and sometimes gender.

Correct concord is essential for grammatical accuracy and effective communication. Errors in concord may lead to ambiguity, misunderstanding, or ungrammatical sentences.

2. Definition of Concord

Concord is the grammatical correspondence between related words in a sentence, especially regarding number, person, gender, and case.

In English, concord mainly occurs between:

1. Subject and verb
2. Pronoun and antecedent
3. Determiners and nouns (to a limited extent)

Examples

- She works hard.
- They work hard.
- Ahmed lost his book.
- The students submitted their assignments.

In each example, the grammatical forms correspond to one another.

3. Types of Concord in English

English grammar generally recognizes two major types of concord:

1. Subject-Verb Concord
2. Pronoun-Antecedent Concord

In addition, linguists often distinguish between:

- Grammatical Concord
 - Notional Concord
 - Proximity Concord
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4. Subject-Verb Concord

Subject-verb concord refers to the agreement between the subject and the verb regarding number and person.

Singular Subjects

A singular subject takes a singular verb.

Examples

- The teacher teaches English.
- The student studies every day.
- My brother lives in Mosul.

Plural Subjects

A plural subject takes a plural verb.

Examples

- The teachers teach English.
 - The students study every day.
 - My brothers live in Mosul.
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5. Concord with Different Persons

English verbs also show agreement with grammatical person.

First Person

- I work.
- We work.

Second Person

- You work.
- You work.

Third Person

- He works.
- She works.
- It works.
- They work.

Notice that in the present simple tense, the third-person singular subject usually requires the addition of -s to the verb.

6. Grammatical Concord

Grammatical concord is based strictly on the grammatical form of the subject.

Examples

- The boy plays football.
- The boys play football.
- This book belongs to me.
- These books belong to me.

The verb agrees with the grammatical number of the subject.

7. Notional Concord

Sometimes agreement is determined by meaning rather than grammatical form. This is called notional concord.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns refer to groups of people or things.

Examples:

- team
- committee
- family
- government
- audience

Singular Interpretation

When the group is considered a single unit:

- The team is winning.
- The committee has made its decision.

Plural Interpretation

When the members are considered individually:

- The team are arguing among themselves.
- The committee have disagreed on the proposal.

British English allows plural agreement more frequently than American English.

8. Concord with Compound Subjects

Subjects Joined by "And"

Subjects connected by *and* generally take a plural verb.

Examples

- Ali and Ahmed are friends.
- Reading and writing are important skills.

Exception

When two nouns refer to one person or one thing:

- Bread and butter is my favorite breakfast.
- The poet and novelist has arrived.

Here, the two expressions refer to a single entity.

9. Concord with "Either..Or" and "Neither...Nor"

When subjects are joined by *either...or* or *neither...nor*, the verb usually agrees with the nearest subject.

Examples

- Either the teacher or the students are responsible.
- Either the students or the teacher is responsible.
- Neither Ali nor his friends are attending.
- Neither the friends nor Ali is attending.

This phenomenon is often called proximity concord.

10. Summary

Concord, or grammatical agreement, is a fundamental aspect of English grammar. It refers to the relationship between words that must correspond in number, person, or meaning. The two principal areas of concord are subject-verb agreement and pronoun-antecedent agreement.

English concord operates through several principles:

1. Grammatical Concord – agreement based on grammatical form.
2. Notional Concord – agreement based on meaning.
3. Proximity Concord – agreement based on the nearest subject.

Learners must pay particular attention to collective nouns, compound subjects, indefinite pronouns, quantifiers, and pronoun reference. Mastery of concord contributes significantly to grammatical accuracy, clarity, and effective communication in both academic and professional contexts.