

Singular or Plural

A talk by Rinat Ben Avraham

Collective nouns

- A collective noun is a noun which refers to a group, but has a form of a singular.
- For example, audience, faculty, class.

Collective nouns

- A collective noun is considered singular when the collection is considered as a whole:
 - The faculty has assigned a special committee for student matters.
 - The group was ready to go on stage.

Collective nouns

- A collective noun is considered plural when referring to the individuals of the collection:
 - A lot of people have arrived.
 - The group were in disagreement about where to go for dinner.

Multiple Subjects

- The verb agrees with the closest adjective:
 - Neither the *girl* nor the boy *is* here.
 - Neither the *girl* nor the boys *are* here.
 - Neither the *girls* nor the boy *is* here.

Quantity Expressions

- Quantities are singular.
 - The number of students is twenty.
 - Eight hours of sleep is not enough.

Quantity Expressions

- Sets are plural:
 - A number of students were late.
 - Part of the students were joking.
 - A half of those surveyed have said the goal is important.

Indefinite Pronouns – Each / Every / Any / None

- Each is singular.
 - Each member of this group is capable of writing a wiki.
- Every is singular.
 - Every person needs love and understanding.

Indefinite Pronouns – Each / Every / Any / None

- Any – is singular if it means "any one"
 - Any of these conditions is sufficient.
- Any – is plural if it means "some"
 - Are any of you available?

Indefinite Pronouns – Each / Every / Any / None

- None – is singular if it refers to mass nouns (uncountable noun)
 - None of the wheat is mature.
- None – can be either plural or singular if it refers to countable nouns
 - None of the books is relevant.
 - None of the books are relevant.

Adjectives

- Adjectives don't have a singular or plural forms, so adding an "s" to an adjective is wrong.
 - Books catalog – wrong!
 - Book Catalog
- You can always say:
 - Catalog of books.

Some other common mistakes

- **Plural sounding terms**
- A term is singular.
 - Fluid dynamics is treated as singular.

Some other common mistakes

- **Singular sounding terms**
- Some terms are plural although they might not sound as such.
 - These phenomena are intriguing.

Versus

- This phenomenon is intriguing.

Singular/Plural nouns

- Singular nouns that can be used correctly as plural but the plural is now mainly poetic
 - Sky - the sky is blue.
 - Water - the water is cold.