

Lesson four : Singular and plural

-Sometimes we use a plural noun for one thing that has two parts. Eg: trousers, jeans, tights..etc. These words are plural, so they take a plural verb. Eg: My trousers are too long (not is too long).

-You can also use a pair of +these words. Eg: Those are nice jeans, I need some new glasses, I need a pair of glasses.

-Some nouns end in -ics but are not usually plural. Eg: **athletics, gymnastics, mathematics, physics, electronics, economics, politics.**

Eg: Gymnastics is my favourite sport.

-News is not plural. **Eg:** What time is the news on television?

-Some words ending in -s can be singular or plural. For example:

Means **a means of transport** **many means of transport**

Series **a television series** **two television series**

Species **a species of bird** **200 species of bird**

-Some singular nouns are often used with a plural verb. **For example:**

Government, staff, team, family, audience, committee, company, firm

-These nouns are all groups of people. We often think of them as a number of people (they), not as one thing (it). So we often use a plural verb:

-The government (they) **want** to increase taxes.

-The staff at the school (they) **are** not happy with their new working conditions.

-In the same way, we often use a plural verb after the name of sports team or a company:

-Scotland **are** playing France next week.

-Shell **have** increased the price of petrol.

*A singular verb (the government wants.../Shell has....) is also possible.

*We always use a plural verb with police:

-The police **have arrested** a friend of mine.

-Do you think the police **are** well paid?

*We do not often use the plural of person (persons). We normally use people (a plural word):

-He's a nice person but they **are** nice people

-Many people **don't have** enough to eat (not does not have)

*We think of a sum of money, a period of time, a distance etc. as one thing. So we use a singular verb.

-Twenty thousand pounds **was** stolen in the robbery (not were stolen)

-Three years **is** a long time to be without a job.

-Six miles **is** a long way to walk every day.

Practice

A- Choose the correct form of the verb, singular or plural. In one sentence either the singular or plural verb is possible.

1- Gymnastics is/are my favourite sport .

2- The trousers you bought for me doesn't/don't fit me.

3- The police wants/want to interview two men about the robbery last week.

4- Physics was/were my best subject at school.

5- Can I borrow your scissors? Mine isn't/aren't sharp enough.

B- Most of the sentences are wrong. Correct them where necessary; put 'right' if the sentence is already correct.

- 1- Susan was wearing a black jeans.
- 2- Brazil are playing Italy in a football match next Wednesday.
- 3- I like Martin and Jill. They're very nice persons.
- 4- I need more money than that. Ten pounds are not enough.
- 5- I'm going to buy a new pyjama.

Key answers:

A- 1- is

2-don't

3-want

4-was

5-aren't

B- 1-wearing black jeans

2-right (is playing is also correct)

3-nice people

4-Ten pounds is not enough

5-Some new pyjamas or a pair of pyjamas.