Subject/Verb Agreement

Basic Rule: A singular subject (she, Bill, car) takes a singular verb (is, goes, shines), whereas a plural subject takes a plural verb.

Example: The list of items is on the desk.
Those cars over there are fast.

Sometimes, though, things get a bit more complicated than that. Let’s look at a few additional rules for special circumstances in subject/verb agreement:

Rule 1. Two singular subjects connected by or, either/or, or neither/nor require a singular verb.

Examples:
My aunt or my uncle is arriving by train today.
Neither Juan nor Carmen is available.
Either Kiana or Casey is helping today with stage decorations.

Rule 2. If all subjects connected by an or, either/or, or neither/nor are NOT singular, then the verb agrees with the noun or pronoun closest to it.

Examples:
Neither she, I, nor my friends are going to the festival.
She, my friends, and I are not going to the festival.
Neither the plates nor the serving bowl goes on that shelf.
Neither the serving bowl nor the plates go on that shelf.

Rule 3. As a general rule, use a plural verb with two or more subjects when they are connected by and.

Example: A car and a bike are my means of transportation.

But note these exceptions:

Exceptions:
Breaking and entering is against the law.
The bed and breakfast was charming.

In those sentences, breaking and entering and bed and breakfast are compound nouns, meaning they are treated as a single entity.
**Rule 4.** Sometimes the subject is separated from the verb by such words as *along with, as well as, besides, not,* etc. These words and phrases are not part of the subject. Ignore them and use a singular verb when the subject is singular and a plural verb when the subject is plural.

*Examples:*
*The politician, along with the newsmen, is expected shortly.*
*Excitement, as well as nervousness, is the cause of her shaking.*
*The two leading ladies, along with their costars, are leaving now.*