Subject-Verb Agreement – Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns can pose special problems in subject – verb agreement.

| either  | anybody | somebody | everybody | nobody  
|---------|---------|----------|-----------|---------
| neither | anyone  | someone  | everyone  | no one  
| other   | anything| something| everything | nothing |

The difficulty is that some indefinite pronouns sound plural when they are really singular.

As subjects, the following indefinite pronouns ALWAYS take singular verbs. Look at them closely.

- Each sees the value of the course.
- Everybody has gone to the movies.
- Nothing seems right around this house anymore!
- Another is on the way.

However, the following indefinite pronouns ALWAYS take plural verbs.

- both
- few
- many
- several
- others

- Many have answered the invitation for Friday evening.
- A few are not coming at all.
- Several indicate that they will be late.

EXCEPTIONS:

A third group of indefinite pronouns takes either a singular or plural verb depending on the pronoun’s meaning in the sentence. Look at them closely. (“SANAM”)

- Some of the debt has been paid off. (Some refers to debt. Therefore, some is singular and takes a singular verb.)
- Some of the debts are still outstanding. (Here, some refers to debts. Therefore, some is plural and takes a plural verb.)

https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/moduleSVAGR.htm
Subject - Verb Agreement - Exercise 3

Part I
Directions: Each sentence below contains an indefinite pronoun subject. Circle the correct verb from the parentheses to agree with the subject.

1. Among the animals, turtles cling to their basic structural design, while many others (is, are) experimenting their way to extinction.

2. Turtles are unique; each (has, have) eight cervical vertebrae, compared with seven of most mammals.

3. Turtles are honored in many countries; in China, for example, everyone (worships, worship) the legendary turtle named Dwei who created the universe.

4. Turtles have specific characteristics; all (displays, display) two plated decks: the upper, called the carapace, and the lower, known as the plastron.

5. Of the female turtles, some (has, have) been found to be twice the size of the males.

Part II
Directions: This group of sentences contains a mixture of correct and incorrect subject-verb combinations. Read each sentence carefully. If the subject and verb agree, write "correct" in the space provided below. If the subject and verb do not agree, correct the sentence. Write the corrections in the space below.

6. Among the fascinating facts about turtles, another are their patterns of dots, splashes, and hieroglyphs.

7. Aquatic turtles are different from land turtles: most is unable to close their shells.

8. Everyone knows Ogden Nash’s celebrated poem about turtles.

9. No one is going to bother snappers, eaters of anything from snakes and wooden canoe chunks to baby alligators.

10. However, of the early tribes, several uses turtles for food.