

SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT

The rule is simple: Subjects and verbs must agree in number.

He	is
(singular)	(singular)

They	are
(plural)	(plural)

Yet it is very easy to break this rule when you write more complex sentences, particularly when the subject of the clause is separated from its verb by modifiers.

The problem that Chris Carlsen experienced with slow learners raise questions about our methods of teacher training.

More likely than not, the writer made "raise" plural because the noun that precedes the verb (learners) is plural. However, "learners" is NOT the subject of this verb.

To find the subject of a verb, take the verb and the remainder of the sentence and ask a question:

What made me wonder about our methods of teacher training?
Problem

Thus "problem" is the subject of the main clause, and since it is singular, the verb "raise" must also be singular:

The problem. . . raises questions about our methods of teacher training.

Also, watch for sentences with complex plural subjects.

Knowing that he doesn't care and not caring myself if he loves me or not makes me feel guilty at times.

What makes me feel guilty at times?
Knowing. . . and not caring

The subject is a compound subject (plural) and thus demands a plural verb ("make")

Knowing. . . and not caring. . .	make
(plural)	(plural)