

Verb agreement

Neither...nor and either...or



Neither the passengers nor the driver **were** hurt.



Neither the passengers nor the driver **was** hurt.

B

05

Explanation

In these sentences the verb agrees with the subject that follows **nor**. If we change the order of the subjects in this sentence we will get: *Neither the driver nor the passengers **were** hurt.*

The same rule applies to **either...or**. For example: *Either your parents or your sister **is** required to attend.*

Note: Remember that *neither* or *either* on its own (i.e. without *nor/or*) is singular. [See rule B04]

More Examples

- Neither black pepper nor pimento **has / have** the pungency of green chili.
(In **neither... nor** constructions, the verb agrees with the last mentioned item: *pimento **has***.)
- Either the two beds or the wardrobe **has / have** to be left behind as the removal van is too full.
(The verb agrees with the last mentioned item: *wardrobe **has***.)
- The surgeon insisted that neither he nor his nurses **was / were** responsible for the error.
(The verb agrees with the last mentioned item: *nurses **were***.)