

English Grammar: Collective / Group Nouns

A Collective Noun (or Group Noun) is a noun that refers to a collection of people, animals or objects and can be used as a singular and a plural noun.

Examples:

- **Groups of people:** army, audience, band, class, committee, crew, family, gang, jury, orchestra, police, staff, team
- **Groups of animals:** colony, flock, herd, pack, pod, school, swarm
- **Groups of things:** bunch, bundle, pair, couple, set, stack

Plural or singular?

When a group is considered as a single entity, the collective noun is referred to using a singular verb or singular pronoun:

The committee has reached a decision. / **It** has reached a decision.
(The committee (as a single entity) has reached a decision.)

But when a group is considered as a collection of individuals, we use plural verbs or plural pronouns:

The committee have different opinions. / **They** have different opinions.
(The people in the committee have different opinions.)

More examples:

- My family **is** very big. (*a single entity*) (**It is** very big.)
- My family **speak** English. (*the people in the family*) (**They speak** English.)
- The police **helps** to prevent crime. (*a single entity*) (**It helps** to prevent crime.)
- The police **wear** blue uniforms. (*reference to the individuals*) (**They wear** blue uniforms.)
- My flock of sheep **is** in my field. (*a single entity*) (**It is** in my field.)
- My flock of sheep **need** to be vaccinated. (*reference to individuals*) (**They need** ...)

Exercise. Complete the following using the given verbs:

1. My family _____ in California. (*live*)
2. The band _____ going to start playing soon. (*be*)
3. The crew always _____ about the long flights. (*complain*)
4. The choir _____ out of tune. (*be*)
5. I think that the orchestra _____ very well. (*play*)
6. The class _____ changing their clothes. (*be*)

More reading: https://www.grammar-monster.com/glossary/collective_nouns.htm

Recommended video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EesQolfp9gQ> (13 mins)