

Editorial Graphics and Publishing Services

What verb should I use with a collective noun?

A collective noun is a noun that names a group of multiple members (committee, Board, family, class, team, flock).

Always consider the collection as **one unit** and use a **singular verb**, unless you want to emphasize the individuals in the group.

EXAMPLES

ONE UNIT: The committee **has** a new leader.

EMPHASIS ON INDIVIDUALS: Have your committee (members is implied here) signed **their** names to the resolution?

ONE UNIT: The audience **was** quiet during the performance.

EMPHASIS ON INDIVIDUALS: The audience (*members* is implied here) **struggle** to get out the door after the performance.

ONE UNIT: The family **has** moved to Maryland.

EMPHASIS ON INDIVIDUALS: All family (members is implied here) **are** required to register for the class.