

Read the passage and explanation below and answer the questions that follow:

## Wayde van Niekerk

South African field and track sprinter, Wayde van Niekerk, holds the world record for the 400 metres. He broke the record at the Rio Olympics in 2016, when he crossed the finish line in an unbeatable time of 43.03 seconds. In doing so, he smashed a 17-year record held by Michael Johnson. Wayde and his mother, Odessa Swartz, are both gifted athletes. While Odessa competed nationally, she was prevented from participating internationally under the apartheid regime. She describes how Wayde overcame obstacles early on as he was born prematurely, weighing only 1kg at birth. However, he showed ability in athletics at an early age. In 2014, he won silver at the Commonwealth Games; in 2015 he was awarded gold at the Beijing World Championships. He now holds the title of being the first athlete ever to break 10 seconds for 100 metres; run 200 metres in under 20 seconds and run 400 metres in under 44 seconds.

### EXPLANATION

**Concord** is closely associated with **agreement**.

**Concord** relates to the agreement between *subjects* and *verbs* and between *nouns* and *pronouns*. In this worksheet, we will be looking at verb/subject agreement. A singular subject takes a singular verb and a plural subject takes a plural verb. However, there are many tricky situations in which it is not clear whether the subject is singular or plural. These relate to subjects consisting of more than one entity (separated by *and* or *or*); to collective nouns; and to certain expressions. Look at these examples:

*Wayde van Niekerk is successful. He runs very fast.* (Singular subject; singular form of verb)

*They are sports-loving people. They all run fast.* (Plural subject; plural form of verb)

*The players and their coach are travelling on the bus* (Plural compound subject; plural form of verb)

*Either the players or the coach is travelling on the bus* (When subjects are separated by *or*, the verb agrees with the subject closest to the verb).

Look out for more tricky situations in the questions below!

1. Identify the **subject** in the first sentence of the text and the **verb** which agrees with it. (1)
2. Explain the rule of concord as it applies to the sentence referred to above. (1)
3. Consider the sentence: "Wayde and his mother, Odessa Swartz, are both gifted athletes." Explain why the verb *are* is in the plural form. (1)
4. Choose the correct form of the **verb** in these tricky sentences and explain your choice:
  - a. Wayde and his coach was/were attending the ceremony. (1)
  - b. Either Wayde or his coach was/were attending the ceremony. (1)
  - c. Either Wayde or his coaches was/were attending the ceremony. (1)
  - d. The South African team are/is competing in the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. (1)
  - e. The team is/are competing in many different sports at the 2020 Olympics. (1)
  - f. Four years is/are a long time to wait before the next Olympics. (1)
  - g. A number of people is/are attending the prize-giving. (1)
  - h. The number of people who attended was/were beyond expectations. (1)
5. State whether the **subject/verb agreement** is correct in the following sentences; if not, write out the sentences correctly:
  - a. Wayde go to the training track on a regular basis.
  - b. The team has meetings in many different venues tonight.
  - c. The performances of each athlete is monitored daily.
  - d. Neither the boys nor the coach run very fast.

(4)

**[Total: 15 marks]**

## Memorandum:

1. Subject: *South African field and track sprinter, Wayde van Niekerk*; verb: *holds*. (1)
2. The subject is singular; hence *holds* is a verb in the singular form. (1)
3. The subject is plural – it consists of two people joined by *and*. It is a compound subject. (1)
4.
  - a. Wayde and his coach **were** attending the ceremony (The subject is *Wayde and his coach*; this is a compound subject made up of more than one person and joined by *and*. It is therefore regarded as a plural subject, needing a verb in the plural form.) (1)
  - b. Either Wayde or his coach **was** attending the ceremony. (When subjects are separated by *or*, or by *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject that is closest to it.) (1)
  - c. Either Wayde or his coaches **were** attending the ceremony. (The explanation is the same as above. *Coaches* is closest to the verb, so the verb is plural.) (1)
  - d. The South African team **is** competing in the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. (A collective noun is regarded as singular if the meaning comes across that it is a single entity.) (1)
  - e. The team **are** competing in many different sports at the 2020 Olympics. (A collective noun is seen to be plural if its meaning relates to different individuals in the group.) (1)
  - f. Four years is a long time to wait before the next Olympics. (The subject is *four years*. This is regarded as a single entity, so it takes a singular verb.) (1)
  - g. A number of people are attending the prize-giving. (*A number of* is seen as plural.) (1)
  - h. The number of people who attended was beyond expectations (As opposed to the above construction, *the number of...* is regarded as a single subject.) (1)
5.
  - a. Wayde **goes** to the training track on a regular basis.
  - b. The team **have** meetings in many different venues tonight.
  - c. The performances of each athlete **are** monitored daily.
  - d. Neither the boys nor the coach **runs** very fast. (4)

[Total: 15 marks]

### Tip for Teacher

#### Some special uses of concord:

- ✓ One out of five people is likely to contract the disease. (When the first number is *one*, the construction takes a singular verb.)
- ✓ Four out of five people are likely to contract the disease.
- ✓ More than one example is used in the text. (This construction generally takes the singular even though the sense is plural.)
- ✓ Nina (and her sisters) is arriving at noon. (If commas, brackets or dashes bracket set off information, then the subject preceding the punctuation determines the number of the verb.)
- ✓ The research conducted into how many people were exercising was extremely thorough. (**Verb separation**: subjects and verbs may be separated by other words, causing confusion.)

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