

## Editorial Graphics and Publishing Services

### How to choose the right verb when you are referring to something in singular and/or plural

This month's tip addresses a question from several users of the Editorial Help Desk—how to choose the right verb when you are referring to something in singular and/or plural.

#### QUESTION

Which sentence would be considered correct?

- The instructor(s) was knowledgeable about the curriculum.
- The instructor(s) were knowledgeable about the curriculum.

#### ANSWER

In order to avoid having to decide whether to use the singular or plural form of the verb (i.e., was or were), choose a verb form that can serve as both singular and plural.

- The instructor(s) knew the curriculum well.
- The instructor(s) had a good command of the curriculum.
- The instructor(s) had extensive knowledge of the curriculum.
- The instructor(s) had knowledge of the curriculum.

Alternative:

- The instructors were knowledgeable about the curriculum.  
(Notice there are no parentheses around the last “s” in the word instructor(s).)

For more, see Gregg Reference Manual, para. 626, page 211.