

By ANNE DONNELL

I was writing a note and thought of this sentence: I hope all of your family is (are) well. I think I know the answer -- I used the verb "are" to match the subject "all." Just want to be sure I am correct, because this seems to be a problem with folks. □ -Just Wondering

That's a great question, O Smart QP of T (Question Person of Today). People do mix this up, and it can get a bit tangled and dysfunctional, like families and knee joints. [*Dysfunctional* is an overkill here, just like those expensive kitchen knobs HGTV wants us all to install for "updating." If you watch "House Hunters" perhaps you join me in amazement as entitled young'uns whine about the color of something like the kitchen cabinets, as if the food

cares

. They're so particular about countertops and tattoos, why can't they distinguish

their

from

there

or

they're

,

to

from

too

or

two

?]

You're probably thinking, "Is she ever going to get this plane in the air here? Or are we doomed to sit all day in the airport looking at the sky?"

HERE'S LIFTOFF. *All* is an indefinite pronoun. It takes its number (is it singular or plural) from its antecedent (noun the pronoun replaces). The antecedent's number should be clear; however, sometimes you have a little thinking to do. Our QP of T gave us one of the latter.

Family is a collective noun, a group word. A family can act as a group or as individuals.

EXAMPLES *A new family [group] has moved next door. The family [individuals] are all going in different directions this summer.*

SO, all in QP of T's example referred to *family* which is, in that sentence, plural. The health of individual members is the subject of inquiry.

All
then is plural, taking a plural verb (
are
, not
is
).

Think of it this way: *All of the pie* [singular – one pie] *is* ____; *all of the pies* [plural – more than one pie] *are* ____.

Here are lists from EnglishPlus.com. Singular Indefinite Pronouns: *another, anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, little, much, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, other, somebody, someone, something*

Plural:

both, a few, many, others, several Singular or Plural: *all, any, more, most, none, some*

Now you're ready; take on that world. (Have you noticed that one of Nashville's female newscasters – she's blonde - uses *that* over much? Isn't analyzing and criticizing fun?)

ONLINE DEPARTMENT "Lawyer Joke"* (Thanks, J.A.) *A lawyer and a senior citizen are sitting next to each other on a long flight. The lawyer is thinking seniors are so dumb he could get one over on any of them easily. So, the lawyer asks if the senior would like to play a game. The senior is tired and just wants to take a nap, so he politely declines and tries to catch a few winks. The lawyer persists, saying that the game is a lot of fun. "I ask you a question, and if you don't know the answer, you pay me only \$5.00. Then you ask me one, and if I don't know the answer, I will pay you \$500.00," he says. This catches the senior's attention and, to keep the lawyer quiet, he agrees to play the game. The lawyer asks the first question. "What's the distance from the Earth to the Moon?" The senior doesn't say a word, but reaches into his pocket, pulls out a five-dollar bill, and hands it to the lawyer. Now, it's the senior's turn. He asks*

the lawyer, "What goes up a hill with three legs, and comes down with four?" The lawyer uses his laptop to search all references he can find on the Net. He sends e-mails to all the smart friends he knows; all to no avail. After an hour of searching, he finally gives up. He wakes the senior and hands him \$500.00. The senior pockets the \$500.00 and goes right back to sleep. The lawyer is going nuts not knowing the answer. He wakes the senior up and asks, "Well, what goes up a hill with three legs and comes down with four?" The senior reaches into his pocket, hands the lawyer \$5.00, and goes back to sleep.

BW (Bigtime Word) antipodal – places on the globe that are located diametrically opposite each other. □ Pronounce it an TIP uh dul if you ever need to say it. Try to remember THAT occasion.□

* Of course I, married to a lawyer for 47 years, like lawyer jokes, but he does, too.