

Reflexive Verbs: Notes!

A verb is reflexive when the subject and the object are the same. It is also when the action can be done to one's self.

Ex: 1

I wash myself.

subject: I

verb: wash

object: myself

Since the subject and object are the same, the verb is reflexive.

Ex: 2

I wash the car.

subject: I

verb: wash

object: car

Here's another example of how a verb can be either reflexive or non-reflexive.

I scratch myself.

subject: I

verb: scratch

object: myself

Since the subject and object are the same, the verb is reflexive.

I scratch the dog.

subject: I

verb: scratch

object: dog

Since the subject and object are different, the verb is not reflexive.

II: When a verb is reflexive, the infinitive ends in "se."

lavar

to wash (non-reflexive)

lavarse

to wash oneself (reflexive)

rascar

to scratch (non-reflexive)

rascarse

to scratch oneself (reflexive)

There is one reflexive verb you have been using since you began studying Spanish.

llamarse - to call oneself

¿Cómo se llama usted?

What do you call yourself?

Me llamo Juan.

I call myself Juan.

Note: A more "natural" translation would be "What is your name?" and "My name is Juan."

When you learned to conjugate regular verbs, you needed to learn a set of pronouns called "subject pronouns."

lavar

yo lavo

tú lavas

él, ella, usted lava

nosotros/as lavamos

vosotros/as laváis

ellos, ellas, ustedes lavan

To learn to conjugate reflexive verbs, you need to learn a different set of pronouns called "reflexive pronouns." These pronouns are positioned before the verb, while the ending "se" is dropped and the verb is conjugated normally.

lavarse

yo **me** lavo
I wash (myself)

tú **te** lavas
you wash (yourself) (informal)

él **se** lava
he washes (himself)

ella **se** lava
she washes (herself)

usted **se** lava
you wash (yourself) (formal)

nosotros **nos** lavamos
we wash (ourselves)

nosotras **nos** lavamos
we wash (ourselves) (feminine)

vosotros **os** laváis
you-all wash (yourselves) (informal)

vosotras **os** laváis
you-all wash (yourselves) (informal, feminine)

ustedes **se** lavan
you-all wash (yourselves)(formal)

ellos **se** lavan
they wash (themselves)

ellas **se** lavan
they wash (themselves) (feminine)

III: The reflexive pronouns are not subject pronouns; rather they are object pronouns.

me (myself)

te (yourself)

se (himself, herself, yourself)

nos (ourselves)

os (yourselves)

se (themselves, yourselves)

The purpose of the reflexive object pronouns is to show that the action of the verb remains with the subject.

Juan se lava la cara.

Juan washes his face. (reflexive)

Juan lava su carro. (non-reflexive)

Juan washes his car.

Note: When referring to body parts, use the definite article, thus "la cara" not "su cara."

Note that many, many verbs can be made reflexive. All it means when a verb is reflexive is that the action remains with the subject.

wash the dog (non-reflexive)

wash your face (reflexive)

raise the book (non-reflexive)

raise your arm (reflexive)

put the baby to bed (non-reflexive)

go to bed (reflexive)

wake up your son (non-reflexive)

wake up yourself (reflexive)

...and so on