

Reflexive Verbs: Part I

A verb is reflexive when the subject and the object are the same.

I wash myself.

subject: I

verb: wash

object: myself

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

I wash the car.

subject: I

verb: wash

object: car

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

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.

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)

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

Now add a flashcard for reflexive verbs:

Verb Flashcards

38. **lavarse to wash oneself**

yo me lavo
tú te lavas
él se lava
ella se lava
usted se lava
nosotros nos lavamos
nosotras nos lavamos
vosotros os laváis
vosotras os laváis
ustedes se lavan
ellos se lavan
ellas se lavan